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New Statesman

WOMEN *TAKE OFF*

Beatrix Campbell on the *other* miners' strike

PLUS: Embryoethics • Dying for a job • Tippett's masque

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New Statesman
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The other miners' strike
The real drama is of food, childcare and a sense of community. Beatrix Campbell on the crucial role of miners' wives p.8

Wanting babies
Hilary Rose attacks the Warnock report for concentrating on the science of frozen embryos and test-tube conception rather than the sociology of parenthood p.14

Because of the recent dock strike which affected our paper supplies last week's issue was restricted to 32 pages. As a result we had to hold over Bretécher and Listings. Normal service is resumed this week.

Too sensual . . .too pious . . .
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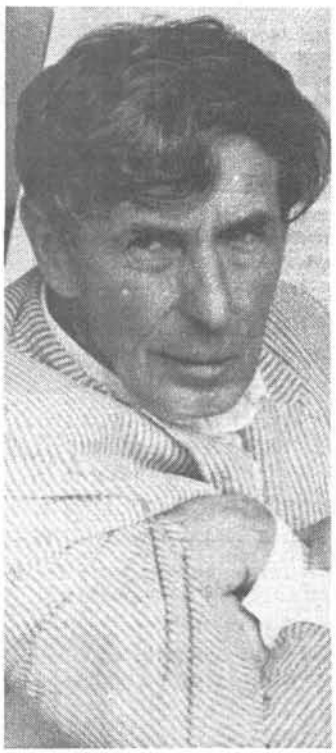

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New Statesman

Vol 108 No 2784 27 July 1984

Mrs Thatcher's poodle

PATRICK JENKIN has made a fool of himself in all of his dealings with local authorities. His proposals on taking new powers to 'cap' the rates of local authorities is the last of a series of mistakes by a man mired in an overall policy which is based neither on logic or equity.

Ever since she became leader of the Tory Party, Mrs Thatcher has had a personal commitment to reform (and preferably abolish) the system of raising revenue by rates on property. The problem is that everyone who looks at the rating system finds more or less fault with it, but no one can suggest a substitute that is not open to equal or more serious objections. So, thrashing around in frustration at not finding a way to get what she wants, she has insisted that direct action be taken to cut back the level of rates themselves.

To win points Patrick Jenkin has come up with a progressively escalating series of penalties, in the shape of reduced central government grant, on authorities which do not do as they are told and cut expenditure in order to hold down the rates. Now that some authorities have reached the point where they are as a result getting no central grant at all, this sanction is no longer effective.

So Jenkins has been driven by the logic of the Thatcher policy to the constitutionally unprecedented step of taking direct control from Whitehall of the current budgets of 18 local authorities. Since decisions about whether and how to spend money are at the centre of any process of independent government, by taking this action Patrick Jenkin will go down in history as the Environment Minister who in effect suspended elected local government in the areas covered by those 18 authorities.

The manner in which this constitutional change is being steamrollered through, despite severe misgivings even in the Tory Party, is a political scandal. The 'offence' of which the local authorities are held to be guilty has been deliberately defined in such a way and the targets for local authority spending set at such a level that the 'hit list' is made up, bar two, of Labour controlled councils. The figures have been juggled so as to exclude Tory controlled shire counties, which looked at one stage as if they might fall into the Jenkin's net and which have their elections next Spring. It has been a totally cynical operation. It will do great damage to the notion that there are some constitutional areas where change ought only to be on the basis of a reasonable measure of bi-partisan agreement.

There is, further, no basis in fact for the argument that Patrick Jenkin is using to justify this enormous extension of central government power. Two years ago this government, as part of its doctrinaire campaign against local government, set up an independent Audit Commission to help eliminate what were presumed to be huge areas of waste. Mr Jenkin must be aware of the main conclusions of its first major report, which is at the stage of final revision and which no one in Whitehall seems to be in any hurry to publish.

This is not surprising because its reported conclusions blow Jenkin out of the water. It concludes that, although the government goes on talking as if local authority current spending has been running out of control, in fact last year it was about in line with the targets set. It also concludes that the uncertainties that central government has created by constantly chopping and changing its system of grant to local authorities has made it so impossible to plan and control local authority spending that as much as £1.5 billion of extra and unnecessary rates have been collected over the last three years.

The Jenkin case is based on the assertion that there is some objective measure of what the 'right' level of spending is for a local authority — which can be established by DoE officials and computers, beyond which any spending is excessive. In fact this benchmark is quite arbitrary and shifts with changes in the crude formula used for calculating Whitehall's rate support grant. The entire exercise has been and continues to be based not on economics, but on pure political spite. □

Nuclear laundry

THE REPORT this week of the Black inquiry into cancer deaths in the Sellafield (Windscale) area has been greeted by the nuclear lobby as a justification for its position. British Nuclear Fuels, which operates Sellafield, even went so far as to claim that the report confirmed its view that the plant cannot be the cause of the high level of childhood leukaemia in the area.

In fact it did nothing of the kind. At the most, it found that on the basis of the facts and arguments before it the case against Sellafield was (to use a Scottish legalism) not proven. That is not the same thing as not guilty. It echoes the open verdict on the death of Windscale worker Joe Corrie reported on page 6.

There are curious gaps in the Black report. It finds that the incidence of childhood cancer has been high in the area since 1950 and suggests that further research should be done to see what has happened to children who moved away from Windscale. It is odd that Black himself did not do this critical research, since the information is presumably contained in the Southport Registry and the national records of childhood cancer.

Even more curious is the argument on which Black's qualified reassurance about Sellafield is based. He argues that, since the number of such leukaemias recorded is 40 times higher than would have been predicted on the basis of 'excess' radiation to which the children were exposed as a result of the plant's operation, there must be some other explanation. This excess is estimated at 13 per cent above the normal level of general background radiation.

This begs two massive questions. Was the level of calculated excess radiation correct, or did Windscale produce much more leaked radiation than anyone knows or is admitting? And are the predictions of how many cancers 'excess radiation' produces correct? There are no definite answers to these questions. But Black's conclusion is entirely based on accepting that present assumptions on both these points are correct. More telling, if less scientific, evidence was the admission from Sir Douglas Black at a press conference that he would not live in the area if he could possibly avoid it. □

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No wonder the DHSS didn't want us to know *this*

THE DHSS has obstructed the publication of the most sensitive part of a detailed study of the supplementary benefit system. Five parts of the 300-page report were published on 2 July, but the sixth part wasn't released: the DHSS received it in April, but wants it rewritten to tone down the embarrassing criticisms made and implied.

The DHSS commissioned the report from the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) — which produced the report on the racism, sexism, drunkenness etc of the Metropolitan Police last November — to discover the effects of a change in benefit policy in 1980, when payments for special needs ceased to be at the discretion of officials.

Working paper C, a 12-month study of the day-to-day work of 10 local offices, exposes the frustration felt by DHSS staff running a vastly complex scheme, overwhelmed by the demand for state benefits, and often responding by seeing all claimants as grasping, devious and undeserving.

But when the two-volume report was published this month it contained only working papers A and B (questionnaire surveys of claimants and DHSS officers) and D to F (on welfare rights advice, DHSS case papers and DHSS statistics) and was swallowed uncritically by the press. The *Guardian* chose to concentrate on the 'utter bewilderment' of claimants about social security rules, although paper B contains some fairly damning findings concerning the ignorance of DHSS officers about even quite routine cases.

The introduction to the report said that the DHSS 'has asked for an opportunity to discuss the draft [of working paper C] both with management and staff, and with the researchers, before the findings are made available to a wider audience'.

Sources in the DHSS suggest that the truth is quite different: that senior DHSS civil servants have been horrifed by the stark portrayal of the attitudes of many benefit officers, expressed in forceful vernacular. Although they have accepted the

'No one is going to tell me they can't manage on benefit'

findings of the research, and cannot challenge its methodology, they regard publication in its present form as 'out of the question'.

They have so far succeeded in stalling publication while negotiating with PSI to produce a 'more balanced' version.

Much of paper C consists of verbatim quotations from DHSS staff, often giving the impression that they regard claimants as a nuisance and that they see their job as being to prevent access to benefits.

One assistant manager is quoted as saying: 'No one is going to tell me they can't manage on benefit. I did and so I should know. I don't see why we should be bothering with extra needs payments. I don't get anything if I need new things. I have to budget for it and save out of my wages. No, they have it all far too easy.'

'Most chancers get the message'

An executive officer explained his way of working as follows: 'I often give a "nil" if I'm doubtful of the punter's credentials, if I think he's trying it on. If the claimant is "legit", he'll come back and ask again and appeal. Then I'll maybe give it, but most chancers I "nil" get the message.'

For most staff, however, it is the sheer weight of numbers which makes the system unworkable. A higher executive officer dealing with 1,800 postal claims a week, with 17 staff, is quoted as saying: 'It's all about numbers here, not rights.'

The study makes clear that many staff do the best they can in impossible circumstances, and points to the case of one executive officer whose 'mission in life was to pay out as much as he could to claimants in need'.

But DHSS mandarins have taken fright at unvarnished quotation of racist and anti-semitic prejudices. The researchers comment: 'Prejudices common in society at large were reflected very clearly by the staff. At one office racist comments were frequent, the staff apparently assuming that the researcher would share their prejudice, rather than report critically on it to the outside world.'

Equally alarming for DHSS headquarters is the quotation of angry and bitter sentiments among local staff directed at 'the arseholes at region and HQ who devise all these bloody hairbrain schemes', and the researchers make quite clear that most of the problems of supplementary benefits administration arise from faults of the system devised by senior civil servants in London.

All this is especially unwelcome to DHSS minister Norman Fowler, who has just launched his 'New Beveridge' review of the entire welfare state. The supplementary benefits review, chaired by junior minister Tony Newton, is a cynical attempt to 'contain' costs rather than a prelude to genuine reform. The other two members of the three-

'It's all about numbers here, not rights'

member review body are Basil Collins, the chairperson of Nabisco and a fellow of the right-wing Institute of Directors, and Robin Wendt, a former assistant secretary at the DHSS.

This impartial triumvirate have read working paper C, but because it hasn't been published they don't have to pay any attention to it.

John Rentoul

Yard clenches its teeth

THE POLICE position on the ban on demonstrations outside South Africa House becomes curiouser and curiouser. Last week (*NS* 20 June) we reported that Scotland Yard, between clenched teeth, admitted that the Commissioner had issued general verbal directions banning such protests outside all embassies on 8 June.

Why, then, does the Yard feel required to issue *weekly* written directions specifically related to the South Africa House demonstrations and totally unrelated to the Vienna Convention or the Diplomatic Privileges Act?

A copy of these Commissioner's Directions dated 14 June and titled 'Vigil outside South Africa House Friday 15 June' contains an opening paragraph forbidding *anybody* to enter or wait in any of a listed number of streets *except* with the permission of a police constable in uniform. The streets, of course, are the streets around the embassy. These directions are normally invoked to control traffic and pedestrians during state visits and such like.

None of the 159 arrests to date were made under these 'directions', nor has the existence of these directions been mentioned by the Yard to anyone.

In the test case on the Met rules which opened at Bow Street on 23 July and was adjourned to 1 August, Commander Howlett was very clear in his evidence that the ban was all his own work — apart from 'some discussion' with 'senior officers'.

The Yard cites the Libyan Bureau incident in explanation of the ban whenever asked. Yet the Libyan incident hardly figured at all in Commander Howlett's explanation. Commander Howlett's interesting view is that 'any demonstration at any embassy' breaches the embassy's 'peace and dignity'.

Terry O'Halloran

Paul Mattsson

Jeremy Corbyn MP — a helping hand

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That convoy could be a hoax

AS POLICE AGAIN surrounded women peace campaigners, another 'cruise missile' convoy left Greenham Common this week in the early hours of Tuesday morning. The Ministry of Defence says that the exercise — the fourth so far — was a 'routine . . . off-base exercise' for US missile crews.

But new technical information reveals that far from being a success in outwitting the Greenham Common women, the exercises have not tested the missiles. Rather, they appear to have been public relations manoeuvres aimed at denting the morale of CND and peace campaigners, by getting vehicles past the Peace Camps' cordon.

- None of the exercises yet held can have involved operational (although unarmed) cruise missiles or have tested their firing procedures.
- The first 'flight' of 16 cruise missiles installed at Greenham Common in 1983 is on NATO Quick Reaction Alert and cannot be disarmed to go on exercise.
- No proper field exercise can even be attempted until a second 'flight' of cruise missiles is known to be installed and operational at Greenham Common.

This week's convoy was reported by CND observers to contain 14 vehicles, including three possible launcher vehicles. But any field deployment or testing of the missiles can only be done as a complete flight, involving all necessary equipment.

This includes 16 missiles inside four launch vehicles, plus two mobile control centres, a satellite tracking dish, radio station, 16 accompanying US escort vehicles together with British police and Army guards. Once in the field, the missile convoy must be able to operate independently of the base, and demonstrate its ability to make 'frequent moves' to avoid detection.

Evidence gathered by aircraft spotters suggests that it is very unlikely that more than one flight of 16 cruise missiles is now available at the base — meaning that no missiles or operational vehicles can leave the base. The arrival of the first cruise flight, in November 1983, required an airlift of 10 trips by giant C-5 Galaxy aircraft, and 2 C-141 Starlifters (carrying the missiles and nuclear warheads). This pattern has not been repeated since, as may be expected for each subsequent cruise missile flight.

Pressed last week as to whether any actual missiles had yet left Greenham, an MoD spokesman pointedly refused to answer. All the Ministry will say is that if missiles do leave the base, they will not be fitted with nuclear warheads. The exercises are said to be a 'natural progression' in testing 'off-based deployment of vehicles' and 'convoy procedures'. But the missiles are not mentioned.

Duncan Campbell

Coal stocks: glaring contradictions

THE RAGING debate about how long it's going to be before shrinking coal stocks at power stations force either power cuts or troops to shift pit-head heaps would be clarified if the government would stop censoring data.

Till the start of this year coal stocks figures came out only one month in arrears. Now they're two months behind, a change that can only be politically motivated since government must be in possession of up-to-date information.

Meanwhile — the May stats should be out end-July — who's right? Energy Secretary Peter Walker claims (*Weekend World* 22 July) that efficient husbanding of stocks and increased oil/nuclear utilisation could fend off power cuts by the CEGB well into 1985.

Weekend World itself offered an estimate that power station coal stocks could be 5 million tonnes by January, down from an (estimated) 17 mt now — ie perilously low by December. The *Observer* (22 July) was more pessimistic still, and predicted measures soon to equalise stocks between power stations.

In fact the estimates with which *Weekend World* tried to berate Walker were almost certainly very conservative. The programme guesstimated that coal stocks in December-January will be declining by about 800,000 tonnes a week, with demand running at about 2 mtw.

But even allowing for (very costly) increases in the oil burn and, say, 300,000 tw from non-striking pits — not 500,000 as often reported, for it isn't all power station coal — stocks will be running down by at least 1.2 mtw by the winter peak.

Walker's plans to equalise stocks between power stations may not be as easy as it sounds. Different stations are designed to burn different grades of coal. All in all, it would be very surprising if we didn't see power cuts well before Christmas and a catastrophic situation in the New Year.

Phil Wright

Gays censored — again

FOUR Customs & Excise exercises in 13 weeks to disrupt imports of books intended for lesbians and gay men have now been followed (25 July) by an Obscene Publications Squad raid on Zipper Store in London's Camden, which sells goods and reading matter for gay men. Some 6 officers were involved under warrants citing the Protection of Children and Obscene Publications Acts. The shop's entire contents were removed. Furious gays are being told police acted on a complaint from the PO.

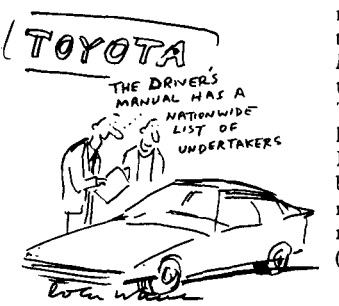
MISCELLANY

Doing his nut

Our favourite transport minister Nicholas Ridley is a bit of a nutter, and we are not speaking here of idle lefty abuse. In his chapter of *The Englishman's Garden* he describes his plans for the Old Rectory, Naunton, Glos: 'There will be a "nuttery" — but we can only think of four English edible nuts — the almond, the hazel, the sweet chestnut, and the walnut'. The Old Rectory's croquet lawn is said to have been the model for the one in *Alice in Wonderland*, as Canon Charles Dodgson once spent a holiday there.

Good sport

Toyota has hit back at Friends of the Earth's campaign against its irresponsible advertising ('The trigger is under your right foot') with a new and unsuspected weapon — the devastating wit of its press officer Brian Townsend. He has sent out a press release to six car and marketing magazines announcing that Toyota's



new sports car, renamed 'Lotus Blossom', is being altered to run on paraffin which will enable it to go from 0-60 mph in 12.6 minutes instead of 10.3 seconds. Advertising for the car will be 'restricted to the classified columns of newspapers using recycled paper only'. The new plans are apparently the result of 'prolonged deliberations held on a westbound tube train taking executives to Heathrow to depart on a month's sabbatical in a Tibetan monastery'. A sense of humour that might be appreciated by car fanatic Nicholas 'Nuttery' Ridley.

Lost in translation

Given that Mirror Group Newspapers is now ultimately owned by Pergamon Holdings Foundation, registered in Vaduz, perhaps the *Daily Mirror's* slogan ought to be FORWARD WITH LIECHTENSTEIN until such time as Robert Maxwell is prepared to put his money where his mouth is.

Jacobs' cracker

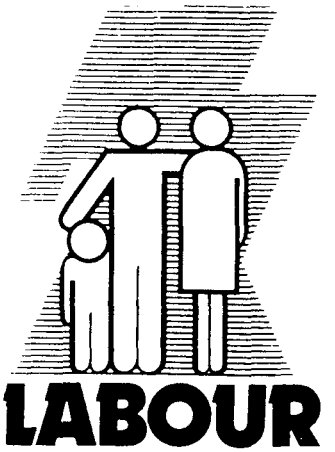
A 'strictly confidential' paper on the Liberal Party's finances discussed by its national executive in May reveals a crisis approaching in 1985, when the estimated expenditure of £½ million is twice as much as the estimated income. Anthony Jacobs, the party's joint treasurer, comments: 'The Liberal Party is so woefully short of members that out of 500 constituencies no less than 112 are derelict, which in practice means rather less than 50 members per constituency, and a *further* 90 constituencies are unable to afford the affiliation fee [£200 per annum] in full.' Jacobs sourly points out that the Conservative Party's affiliation fee for constituencies is going up to £200 *a week*, and proposes more than tripling the fee to £700 by 1988.

Face facts

Our Nairobi correspondent reports that Lawi Mwanika Festus has entered the controversy which raged in this column in April over bearded politicians. Mr Festus writes to the Kenyan *Daily Nation*: 'Actually I am surprised to hear and read in the press that those people with long beards are nicknamed "Karl Marx". Moreover, they are regarded as political radicals. May I appeal to those with this idea that they are very wrong indeed. They must realise that Jesus Christ had a long beard, longer than that of Karl Marx. Jesus was not a politician but a saviour of mankind. A beard neither adds political acumen nor makes one a Marxist.' Jeremy Corbyn (see facing page), please note.

Political perspectives

The Labour Party's new Scottish logo (below) is not very popular with some party activists north of the border. They argue that the male-dominated nuclear family image may not be appropriate for a party that is campaigning for sexual equality. Party officials' defence of the logo is nothing if not robust. 'Look at it this way,' said one, 'it could be a woman in trousers, a man in a kilt and a dwarf.



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Jury baffled by missing Sellafield records

THE FURTHER studies promised as follow-up to the Black report on childhood cancers near Sellafield, the former Windscale, had better take into account 'cancer cluster' fears on behalf of the nuclear plant's workers as well as surrounding inhabitants.

Yorkshire TV, whose findings about abnormal childhood incidence of leukaemia in the Sellafield vicinity prompted the 9-month Black enquiry, had originally intended to investigate cancer among Sellafield plant workers, but found the information on children too disturbing to ignore.

Now an 'open verdict' returned (13 July) in Whitehaven on a former Windscale worker Joe Corrie, who died in 1983 of myeloma, a bone cancer linked with radiation, will be worrying the management of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL), Sellafield's operators.

Joe Corrie worked through the fall-out released from the 1957 plutonium pile fire at Windscale, and there was a delay in his being told his clothes were contaminated. However, an astonished jury heard this month that no contamination records existed for Corrie for that year — and that evidence was only available for 1951-3 and 1959-61.

The inadequacy of BNFL's evidence to the court was further underlined when Dr Geoffrey Schofield, chief medical officer, later admitted to the press that he had failed to mention an additional three myeloma deaths among workers since BNFL's own worker mortality study was published in 1981.

This study had found four deaths over a first two-year period, a level comparable with an expected 4.1 based on national figures — but an extra three deaths in as many years looks like a significant statistical excess.

The open verdict in Whitehaven is in sharp contrast to last November's Cockermouth verdict on Kenneth Roberts, who also died of myeloma, where the jury were instructed to 'ignore what they had seen on Yorkshire Television', and returned a death from natural causes verdict.

The 13 July Corrie verdict opens the door for a possible legal action against BNFL from widowed Mrs Corrie, although she may opt for the less risky compensation scheme that is offered to workers' widows where radiation linked cancer is involved.

Because the settlements don't involve legal liability they don't prejudice the remarkable claim the government still makes, that 'there have been no fatalities as a result of exposure to radiation arising out of accidents in the nuclear industry since its inception' (Hansard 14 May 1984).

Ruth Balogh

Time to teach Tories a lesson

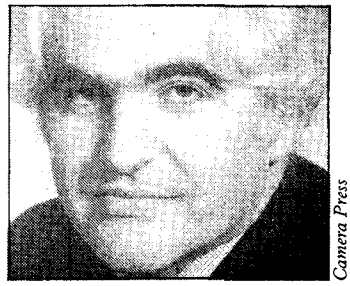
THIS WEEKEND (28-29 July) a letter goes out to all Labour parties in Tory-controlled shire counties from Socialist Education Association general secretary Graham Lane urging that nursery provision be the major plank in next year's county council elections.

The issue is one on which the Conservatives are at their most vulnerable, thinks Lane — and Labour should promise to convert surplus primary school space into nursery classes. So after more than a decade of lip-service to the idea of education for the under-5s Labour now acknowledges the issue is a potential vote-winner.

The shift began after last year's General Election defeat. The party sacked its education policy committee, which had spent years drawing up detailed statements on all aspects of education from cradle to grave. In its place is a smaller committee with the remit to campaign and not just analyse.

First fruit of the new approach is a charter for the under-5s due to be launched later this year. Pre-school provision in Britain is, by European standards, appalling, but is much better in Labour controlled local authorities in the north and London than in the Conservative controlled shire counties.

Opinion polls have consistently shown that a majority of parents with young children would like full-time nursery places for their three, four, and five year olds. The charter will project Labour as the party that cares for the under-5s.



Camera Press

Giles Radice, Labour spokesperson on education — turned up on 14 July at National Childcare Campaign conference. Evidence Labour cares?

Variations in levels of nursery school provision are extreme. Overall, approximately 13,000 children attend full-time nursery school; 37,000 attend part-time. The figures include rising fives in infant schools. Take them away and only 22 per cent of 3-4 year olds receive any form of nursery education. These statistics mask the enormous regional differences which range from 7-12 per cent in the South West and South East (excluding ILEA) to 35 per cent in the North of England.

Bad though the situation is it is about to get worse as rate-capping takes effect. Nursery education is non-statutory and, at the best of financial times, is considered an extremely low priority by many councils. Latest assessments suggest a 6.5 per cent cut in nursery education is likely by 1987.

Barry Hugill

Shift left by Scots Nats?

THE LEFT in the Scottish National Party (SNP), much muted since the damaging internal debacle over the socialist 79 Group ended last year, is planning a modest come-back. As nominations for Party office-bearers and members of the national executive closed last week, it became clear that left-wingers are making a concerted bid to strengthen their representation.

There's been no attempt to put up an organised left slate — one of the activities that led to the banning of internal pressure groups like the 79 Group at the Party's 1982 conference. But there have been 'informal discussions' among those on the left which have resulted in many of the key posts being challenged by prominent left-wingers.

The most interesting contest will be for senior vice-chairman *(sic)* — effectively the Party's number two post — between the right-wing fundamentalist Margaret Ewing (Margaret Bain until she married MEP Winnie Ewing's son), and the left's Isobel Lindsay. The post's present incumbent, right-winger Jim Fairlie, is said to be standing down partly through dissatisfaction at the perceived reawakening of the left.

Gordon Murray, a maverick right-winger who is currently vice-chairman responsible for local government, faces a strong challenge from former 79 Group member Jim Mitchell, who came within a hair's breadth of winning last year. Three other vice-chairmanships and the post of national secretary are all being fought by former 79 Group members, in one case without being opposed.

As well as electing the 13 office-bearers, the Party's annual conference in September will choose representatives for the 10 ordinary places on the executive. It would be surprising if one of the former 79 Group members standing simply for a place on the executive — Jim Sillars — failed to get elected.

The left in the SNP has always seen the main task as being to take votes from Labour in the industrial central belt, while the right has tended to target Tory and Alliance voters in the north. Following last month's European elections, when the SNP pushed the Alliance firmly into fourth place in Scotland, left-wingers are hoping for a regrouping of those in the SNP who see the need to go for the Labour vote. Whether this occurs and whether the SNP would then again begin to pose a real threat to the Labour Party remains to be seen.

Rob Edwards

Council scoreboard

See commentary opposite

17 May

South Northants DC	Con hold

7 June

Rutland DC	Lib hold

12 June

Kent CC	Con hold

14 June

Lothian Reg.	LAB GAIN (Con)
Barnsley City	LAB GAIN (Lib)
Newham LBC	LAB GAIN (Lib)
Newham LBC	Lib hold
Newham LBC	Lab hold
Wakefield City	Lab hold
Slough DC	Lab hold
Northumberland CC	Lab hold
West Yorks CC	Lab hold
Kingston LBC	Con hold
***Merton* LBC**	Con hold
Haringey LBC	Con hold
Tyne & Wear CC	Con hold
East Hants DC	Con hold

21 June

Cornwall CC	Lab hold
Eastbourne DC	Lib hold
Chelmsford DC	Lib hold
Dundee DC	Con hold

28 June

South Holland DC	LAB GAIN (Con)
Trafford MBC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Essex CC	Lab hold
Newham LBC	Lab hold
Ellesmere Port DC	Con hold
South Herts DC	Ind hold

5 July

Derwentside DC	LAB GAIN (SDP)
Lincs DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
South Bucks DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Sedgmoor DC	IND GAIN (Con)
Lambeth LBC*	Lab hold
Liverpool City	Lab hold
Langbaurgh DC	Lab hold
Restormel DC	Lib hold
Lancs CC	Con hold
Penwith DC	Con hold

12 July

Uttlesford DC	SDP GAIN (Ind)
Wellingborough DC*	Lab hold
Wear Valley DC	Lab hold
Wilts CC	Lab hold
Southwark LBC	Lab hold
Vale of White Horse DC	Con hold
South Tyneside MBC	Ind hold

19 July

North Beds DC	LAB GAIN (Con)
Windsor DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Ryedale DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Luton DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
East Hants DC	CON GAIN (Ind)
North Yorks DC	Lab hold
Tower Hamlets LBC	Lib hold
Lambeth LBC	Con hold
Essex CC	Con hold
Ipswich DC	Con hold

**Elections for two vacancies for same ward*

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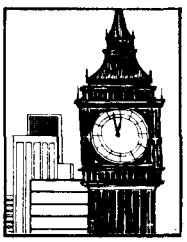

PETER KELLNER Political Editor

Labour leads—thanks to the SDP and Liberals

A USEFUL political maxim is: don't count your chickens before they vote. It applies as much to National Executive decisions as to general elections, as this week's events have demonstrated only too clearly.

Still, Labour seems to have modest cause for satisfaction as we break up for the summer holidays. No opinion poll since late May has put the Conservatives in the lead, and four of the five conducted since mid-June have shown Labour in front. (The fifth showed Labour and Tory level.)

Now I don't want to spoil anyone's hols, but things might not be as rosy as they seem on the surface. After three years of great turbulence in electors' loyalties, changes in support for the parties are occurring only slowly — so slowly that short-term fluctuations in opinion poll figures are as likely to reflect sampling differences as real movement. But, since the beginning of the year, changes there have been — and they are not wholly encouraging for Labour.

To eliminate as much statistical wobble as possible, the following table shows the standing of the parties for each month since January, as measured by an average of the figures published by MORI, Marplan and Gallup. (The July figures exclude MORI, which has not yet reported.)

	Con %	Lab %	Lib/SDP %	Con lead %
Jan	42	38	19	4
Feb	41	37	20	4
Mar	40	39	20	1
April	40	38	20	2
May	39	37	22	2
June	38	38	22	0
July	36	39	24	-3

The final column is reassuring, with Labour slowly but surely overhauling the Tories. But a closer look at the figures suggests a more worrying trend. The two consistent movements have been the erosion of the Tory share and the rise in Alliance fortunes. Labour's support has remained static for all practical purposes — at 38 per cent, plus or minus one. Labour now leads not because of any surge in support for the party itself, but because of a 5½ per cent swing since January from the Conservatives *to the Alliance.*

Confirmation of this trend comes from the *NS's* latest survey of local council by-elections. As ever, the actual voting figures show the Alliance doing better than in the opinion polls, but the *movements* in support are wholly consistent with the polls: the Tories slipping since early in the year, and the Alliance gaining, especially since April.

In the past six weeks, since 14 June, 53 councillors have been elected in 50 contests (see table on facing page; three of the wards held elections to fill two vacancies). These are the gains and losses:

	Seats defended	Seats lost	Seats gained	Seats held now
Con	24	11	1	14
Lab	18	0	6	24
Lib	6	1	6	11
SDP	1	1	1	1
Others	4	2	1	3

Those figures look mildly encouraging for Labour; but again there is a catch. Most of Labour's gains were in wards lost in 1982 or 1983, both bad years for the party. They confirm a recovery by the party, not a decisive lead. And the voting figures, from 35 three-cornered contests, show that the Alliance — and particularly the Liberals — are still able to mount an effective challenge:

	Votes	%
Conservative	34,811	34.7
Labour	33,725	33.6
Liberal/SDP	29,961	29.9
Others	1,866	1.9

HOW TO TACKLE the Alliance? As I have argued before, it is a trickier question than might appear. If Labour's support at a general election were 40 to 42 per cent then, within wide bounds, the more the Tory vote crumbles to the Alliance, the better. But that proposition assumes that the Alliance starts the next election campaign with, at the most, 20 per cent support. If it starts with 25 per cent or more, and Labour, as now, has no more than 39 per cent, then there would be a real possibility of a breakthrough by the Alliance, depriving Labour of any chance of a clear victory.

That is why recent poll results contain an ambiguous message for Labour. In the short run it is encouraging for the party to be in the lead for the first time since 1981; but in the longer run this advantage may prove to have been won at a terrible price: the revived credibility of the Alliance. The one way to remove that fear — or to make sure that only the Tories are worried by it — is for Labour to start demonstrating support consistently above 40 per cent. To achieve this, the party must rely on its own efforts, and not assume that it will benefit automatically from the government's unpopularity.

Put like that, it sounds like a bland, obvious point. But inspect the state of the party's organisation and a chill pessimism descends on discussion of Labour's prospects. On 1 June the *NS* carried an extensive and critical report on Walworth Road. The story can be updated.

At the time of our article James Mortimer, Labour's general secretary, had just received a 'review of reviews' by John Garrett, a management consultant and former left-wing MP for Norwich South. Garrett summarised no fewer than seven studies that had been conducted into the party's organisation during the past 17 years.

Mortimer has now responded. He has written, in a paper to this week's National Executive, that many of the detailed proposals over the years have now been adopted. But he acknowledges that some of the most important recommendations have not been followed up. His reasons — or excuses — fall into three groups: change would disturb and disrupt the existing staff, straining their loyalty and risking their effectiveness; change would be costly, especially if streamlining involved making heads of department redundant; and some changes have been specifically discussed and rejected by the National Executive in the past, so to implement them now would be to violate NEC decisions.

It is clearly daft to deny that any of these points have *some* force. But the first two have very little. Staff morale is already low. At least three of the party's press officers during the last election have put in writing (one of them publicly) their strongly-worded criticism of Walworth Road's organisation during the election campaign. More recently, during the Euro-campaign, there were running battles between the — temporary — European campaign unit and the — permanent — International Department. Within the past fortnight there has been an angry confrontation between the library staff and Mortimer over his wish to cut the library staff from five to four. An inept reorganisation might destroy what loyalty remains; but a sensible reorganisation now looks like being the only way to restore it.

Money is an indisputable problem, and it will get worse as trade unions ballot their members on whether their affiliation to Labour should continue. But is money now becoming an alibi rather than a reason for obstructing change? One of Walworth Road's most loyal election campaigners argues that, if the Tories' and Labour's financial positions had been reversed last year, 'they would have done fewer things well, and we would have done more things badly'.

In one respect, however, Mortimer is certainly right: the NEC has blocked a number of reforms. In his 'review of reviews', Garrett concluded that 'the central problem of head office organisation is the lack of interest in it of the NEC'. Today the battles on the NEC generally concern arguments between Left and Right — not whether the side that wins can expect its victory to be translated into effective action by the staff. Two of the few people to take an interest in the subject are David Blunkett, elected on to the NEC last year, and Robin Cook, who is standing this year. They at least appreciate that, if Labour is ever to become an effective party again, the buck stops — and starts — there. □

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The other miners' strike

As the government launches its offensive against a strike'controlled by one crazed man', Beatrix Campbell reports on the real strike which the miners' wives have turned into their own

IN TEN years time, this miners' strike will be remembered as the one in which women emerged as an unprecedented force in the community. It's a memorable presence because the women were so absent as a collective force before, though the dangers associated with that absence are part of conventional wisdom in miners' politics. Everybody knows that an angry isolated woman may have the power to push her man across a picketline. 'I should say, honestly, that men would be back at work if it weren't for our women's group,' says Linda King, the wife and mother of two Nottinghamshire miners, who is active organising a kitchen and food parcels. 'I would have dragged mine back to work. On your own you're under too much pressure, because you've got all the housework to do and no money and him sitting around all day.'

A 'normal' miner's wife's life is a life of exclusion and isolation, welded to a *culture* of solidarity and support, though that culture has no clear organised form for women. Yet women's lack of organisation is a disaster in a strike of this duration and scale. The mobilisation of women also involves the demobilisation of men's resistance.

Women have their own stake in the campaign against closures. 'I cried every day for a month,' said Carol Turner of her move to Ollerton, Notts, a dozen years ago when her husband was transferred from a closed pit in Derbyshire. It's not the same for miners: 'He insisted on going to the Welfare to get to know the other men. And there was his work, where there were other men. So he was able to make friends. But there was nothing for the women to go to. Everything revolves round the pit and the Welfare.'

The miners' welfare institute stands out in Ollerton as one of its few palatial premises, 'It is the centre of community life, but women can't be full members,' says Carol Turner, who is a Labour councillor in Ollerton. 'You're taken, you're somebody's wife, you belong to somebody.' Another Ollerton woman, an active member of the National Union of Public Employees and the Labour Party, agrees: 'It's the hub of the community, but there's nothing for women and children.'

For the women, the feeling that there is neither place nor time for them in the politics of the community is summed up in the image of Sunday — the men are out at a meeting, then they fall into the Welfare for a pint while their wives are at home cooking their Sunday dinner. And if they are Labour Party members then, according to these women, the men sleep it off in the afternoon and then they're off again to the Sunday evening meeting.

One Ollerton woman, a single parent, who works in the colliery canteen, is a member of the NUM in her own right. She never goes to her union meeting — always on a Sunday morning because weekends *aren't* leisure time, they're work time when she does the week's housework and spends time with her children. 'And anyway, I don't suppose there'd be anything to do with me at the meeting,' she says. 'I keep asking the officials what's happening to our equal pay claim, but they never seem to know.'

How are the women to hear the miners' case? Where the strike is solid it is because the case has been fought for within the union. But the women aren't *in* the union. Many women in support groups say they would have got involved earlier if they'd understood the argument. But community meetings weren't organised for them until they organised some themselves. The absence of a political life which could have alerted them to the strike has struck some women for the first time.

IF WOMEN are the key to the unity of the community at large, how did they go about creating their movement? It appears on the surface to have come from nowhere. Nationally, the work of Jean McCrindle, socialist and feminist at Northern College, has been at the centre of some of the most conscious organising. But this does not explain the local flowering of groups.

In some cases, it was the spontaneous combustion of the women themselves. Dunscroft is near Doncaster, a spartan mining village. There, a miner's wife in her thirties, Maureen Douglass, got together with some of her friends and neighbours early in the strike and organised a women's meeting — 70 turned up. Those who couldn't or didn't want to be too much involved in organising and picketing, agreed to help with babysitting so that the other women could. Many of these women enjoyed shared child care for the first time.

In Aylesham, Kent, Kay Sutcliffe recalls that a small group of women got organised during the 1974 strike, based around a local club. They came together again in 1984, but in much greater numbers, to visit coalfields opposed to the strike. At first they just wanted to provide an opposing answer to the small group of much-publicised Nottinghamshire wives who were, like them, supporting their husbands. Only they were escorting their husbands to the picketlines in order to cross them. The men in Kent are very proud of the women's initiative. 'I'd go so far as to say that they've got more ingenuity and imagination than we have,' said a Kent NUM veteran.

In hard-pressed Derbyshire, the women's network also had a long history. Betty Heathfield went to Skegness, the miners' resort, every year for the miners' weekend school. 'I used to get cheesed off because the miners had their school and we were traipsing about with the kids. But we started to sort things out, we had a creche so we could do what we wanted, and then we'd have a women's thing and the men would look after the kids. We never managed to keep our group going because we came from all over Derbyshire. But a lot developed from that, we were encouraged to be

Raissa Page/Format

Kent soup kitchen: food has become part of the politics of the strike

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Raissa Page/Format

Dickensian dress for Dickensian times: fund-raising in Abertillery

something for ourselves'.

Tony Benn's Chesterfield by-election galvanised women. A Labour Club opened which provided a base and Caroline Benn suggested the idea of a women's canvass — by women among women — which had already been tried in London. The women involved kept their nucleus together, mobilised during the overtime ban and went on to hold afternoon meetings in villages during the strike. Now they have 30 groups in the country.

In nearby Mansfield, in Notts, a small group of three women and a man, three of them Labour and one Communist, got together in the first week of the strike. Now there are 26 groups in the county. They have been organising food and funds and gone out speaking on welfare rights. They now have two premises, including a room in the NUPE office in Mansfield. Like many of the women's groups, they're located separately from the NUM so they can reach out beyond the union's entrance.

The women's participation discloses the complex emotional and material economy of a strike. The strike demands both the organisation of an industrial offensive, done by the men, and the organisation of daily life. The political campaign can't be sustained if life itself is not sustained — a mundane but equally heroic struggle.

There is a suspicion among some men, voiced by Barnsley NUM lay official David McDevitt, that the 'coal face' of the strike is picketing. Concern with everyday matters is not only marginal, but a diversion from the political thrust and from men's primacy in the struggle. 'All these food kitchens are watering down the strike. Women keep ringing me up and asking where's the money gone — but we are the NUM and we don't have to account to any women's group.'

McDevitt thinks his view is not shared by the majority of men active in the leadership of the strike. Bill Smith, for instance, secretary of the militant Whittle pit in Northumbria, sums up the significance of the women's work: 'It's keeping the strike solid. The women have made my job a quarter of what it would have been. Sixty-two per cent voted to come out, but the picketing has not been very strong, the men were not really motivated before, but with the women coming out like this so many more men are coming out. It's challenging men's attitudes — the majority of men think the dispute is something for the men. But the branch officials are more involved with the women than the local lads are, and we tell them that we couldn't do it without them. The women have reacted to this as if it was a disaster, which in a way it is.'

Food parcels are put together for single men who have absolutely no income coming in at the moment. The NUM does not pay strike pay but the government has calculated social security on the pretence that it does, hoping to starve men back to work. That strategy is countered by the elaborate network of canteens throughout the coalfields, evoking a communal response to a disaster. At Barnsley, a four-ringed cooker provides daily meals for 400 people. In Tyne and Wear, Eppleton Wives Support Group serves 300 meals a day, four days a week for pickets, wives and families.

COLLECTING FOOD has become part of the politics of this strike. Food convoys have been despatched into the coalfields from several cities, filled with thousands of small inputs of tins and durables, and large donations from regional trade unions. The very act of collecting has been made political by a police force which appears to be desperately improvising devices to nail any *public* mobilisation of support for the miners. Throughout the country, collectors have had their funds and food boxes confiscated under some eccentric interpretation of the charity and vagrancy laws. In one baroque case in Greenwich, four people regularly stationed themselves outside the Woolwich Sainsbury's store. After a failed attempt to arrest them for obstruction they were arrested at the end of June under the vagrancy laws — for 'begging'. Only after donors jammed the police station with complaints was the food returned to the collectors and a day later they were told there would be no charges after all.

In Nottingham public collection has suffered a bitter twist because of the political division in the county. Collectors were stationed at Mansfield marketplace, but Mansfield District Council has unanimously revoked their right. Thirty-eight Labour councillors, five Tories and three SDP members voted that only registered charities could collect in the street.

Many workplaces are splitting their collections between the men and women. Half goes to the strike HQ and half to women's groups as a guarantee that the 'hard currency' of food goes direct to where it is needed. Women have lobbied some strike HQs, demanding a fairer distribution of resources. Whether conscious or not this gesture also respects the autonomy of the women's groups, which prize a political and economic independence not yet enjoyed by many of the individual women themselves.

At the beginning of the strike there was a widespread feeling that money was the most efficient form of economic solidarity because it didn't involve the hassle of transportation. Since those early days, however, we've seen the food convoys starting up; the political rewards are now seen to outweigh the hassle, tangible reminders of the history of hunger in working-class struggle. Asked to give something useful it makes you think: what do people who've had no income for more than four months *need*? Growing children have reached the summer with last year's sandals, a size too small and tee-shirts that don't fit. The washing powder and detergents have run out. Shoes need mending. Television licences . . . prescriptions . . . bin liners . . . nappy liners . . . toilet paper . . . tampax.

'We've had a load of stuff brought up by the Union of Communications Workers,' says Ida

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Hackett, 'and this bloke looked at me and said "I hope you don't mind, but I've brought some STs . . ." I said don't be daft, the women will be thrilled.'

THE WORK of feeding and maintaining those involved in the strike has moved from the private homes into the public world and now into the centre of the life of the strike. Nurturance, in a long strike, becomes more determinant than street-fighting. That brings its own rewards. The women's meetings enable women to find their own place in the political struggle, instead of hibernating, lonely and hungry at home.

'Women come out of their homes for food,' says Betty Heathfield, 'and they realise they're not alone. We'd not found anything strong enough to bind them together before. If you said feminism they'd say, oh no, we're not like that. They never felt part of it — bit trendy and middle class. But it means something to them now, they just think it's women standing up for themselves, we have great discussions about children, fellas, everything.'

Picketing has perhaps been the most contentious issue between the men and women. In some counties the women's willingness to join picketlines was rebuffed — with feeling, in the name of protection, or just straight opposition to women muscling in on their act. 'It's our job, it's our fight, it's our picket', said some Yorkshiremen.

Some women in Yorkshire went over the county border towards Ollerton, the trouble spot, when carloads of men were being turned back. A wry smile crept across their faces as they described their own success in getting through the police blockade. 'If the men had any sense they'd get women to drive them through — that's the only way they'll get into Nottinghamshire,' they said. Other women simply organised their own 'demonstrations' instead, to make the presence and the support of women obvious to the communities they visited.

The Oakland women's group in Gwent asked the chairman of our lodge to see if they could picket. ' "No" he said. He doesn't agree with women on the picketline. We can do anything else, not that. He said "you've got enough to carry on with doing the work you've been doing." In any other strike women have always stayed at home. But we're not satisfied with that now.'

They reported this to members of Hackney Greenham Women's Support Group who went to meet the Oakland women. When asked why things had changed, one said: 'I think the Greenham ladies have got a lot to do with it.' When they came to London in July for a women's benefit for them, organised by the Greenham groups, she said she'd shown her husband, 'a fantastic man,' a Greenham newsletter. 'But he just refused to read it.' Women's politics could go so far.

The images representing picketline confrontations raise other issues for women. Many draw the conclusion that what is presented is macho men v macho men. Some of the women who are themselves trade unionists in Ollerton, Nottinghamshire, went down to see the fighting for themselves on the fateful night when one picket died. Their anger was fuelled by the feeling that the refusal to call a ballot was, whatever the rights and wrongs of the issue, seen to be undemocratic. 'If they'd not carried on like this the Nottinghamshire men would be out now,' said one woman, a shop steward in her own factory, who felt she'd never call a strike in this way. 'If they'd called a ballot I think it would have gone Arthur's way, actually. But now they won't be bullied.'

The Gwent women told the Greenham women, 'we've all said would we see violence like at Orgreave if it was all women? Get all the men out and let us women in and see what happens. On a picketline at Port Talbot we turned four lorries away. We used persuasion — and asked them to respect the picketline. It was lovely.'

Inescapably the sight of the picketlines echoes the sight of blockades at Greenham Common. Women and men who've joined picketlines at pits and depots have received none of the training in non-violent direct action which the peace movement demands to discover its members' fears and strengths, to discover the best way of coping with violence. Sit down, comes the advice. Hold on to each other. Step back, consider how you feel, how the land lies, how the balance of forces is matching up. Make sure you can see what's going on and that you can handle what's going on. Experience shows the unnerving futility of a big crowd lurching up to the gates, pushing and shoving with the police. Today they always win. The worst thing you can do is to stay on your feet: that way you can't see anything and you are at your most unstable.

Some men have instinctively resisted speculation on the sort of tactics the miners might borrow from Greenham Common. Some are mesmerised by the idea, but interject with the proviso: 'but would miners lie down, could they?' It's as if lying down is something inherently threatening to the virility of class warriors. Is this more important than the recognition that the infantry charging the cavalry from its trench simply leads to broken heads?

WHAT, AFTER ALL, are the long-term implications of women's mobilisation in this strike? Clearly, one of the first is that women from relatively isolated milieux have enjoyed access, in their own right, to a wider political world than they've ever had access to before. Many of the miners despatched around the country have encountered women whose feminism has to be negotiated when perhaps it wouldn't have been tolerated among their own. 'Madam chairperson . . . is that how you say it . . .?' said one Welsh miner introducing his speech to a meeting of socialists and feminists in Bristol recently. And by all accounts they've felt not only chastened but that they've benefitted from the experience.

Betty Heathfield says the NUM's local leaders 'now always think about what part women can play and they don't have a meeting unless they have a woman there. Sometimes it feels like the token woman, but at least we are heard. Mining is the most chauvinistic industry and for this to have happened is unique.' 'One lass told me she'd had her first child,' said Ida Hackett, 'then her second and she never got out. Now she says 'the bugger's not going to get me to stay in again.' She said 'I've lived these last few weeks.'

And what of the future? 'Everybody is saying things won't be the same again — the women will always be there now'. 'I'd like to think the role of women was going to change', says Florence Anderson, a miner's wife and local councillor. 'They'll be searching for something more, they'll always say, "I'm not going back to sitting at home", because they've discovered their own potential and they're going to question the order of things. They've not looked for a lot out of life before and they've not got it.'

Already there is a new joke-culture about whether there will be a life after the strike. One Kent miner said, half joking whole earnest, at a meeting, 'Please Mr Chair, when this strike is over can I have the wife back? Not this one, the one I had before.' Women expect the men to revert, and inspired as they are by their own efforts and ingenuity, many still feel that politics is no place for them. 'I'm hoping to carry on after this,' says Linda King. 'But I'm not clever enough to get politically involved.' The quality of the women's involvement has not made the national world of politics any less alien.

For sure, the women have organised as *women*, they now have a sense of their own strength and without a doubt they have created the infrastructure of a working-class women's movement within the coal communities. But its very existence is contingent on it being a movement *in support* of men, and it has the support of men because it is *for* them.

But the future of this women's movement lies in its commitment to women and changing the relationship between women and men. In decades to come, when we come to write and reflect upon the history of this strike as a watershed in working-class politics, the real test of change will be whether this women's movement is allowed to survive — for the women themselves. □

THIS ENGLAND

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□There are those who object to the Queen's garden parties, but it is hard to know why. There is nothing exclusive about them. There is a 40-1 chance that anyone will get an invitation during his or her lifetime. — *Observer* (Martin Fagg)

□Rolls-Royce yesterday announced a new 'cut-price' Bentley. The £49,497 Bentley 8 is £5,743 cheaper than any model produced by the Crewe company and is the first move in a new marketing campaign aimed at the younger executive. — *The Times* (M. Lintott)

□Sir, it is to be hoped that Reigate and Banstead's Health Committee will give long and thoughtful study to the question of the rental of so-called 'superloos'. The British public, long suffering from the onslaught of decimalisation, metrication and golden delicious, is psychologically unsuited to be bogged down by further encroachments upon its liberties by this French import. One feels that generally the new aseptic receptacles will find little patronage from the descendants of British yoeman stock, who have for centuries past taken for granted their God-given right to relieve themselves freely and not dash willy-nilly hither and thither for change in order to enter a 21st century thunderbox. — Letter in *Midsurrey Courier* (W. Relph)

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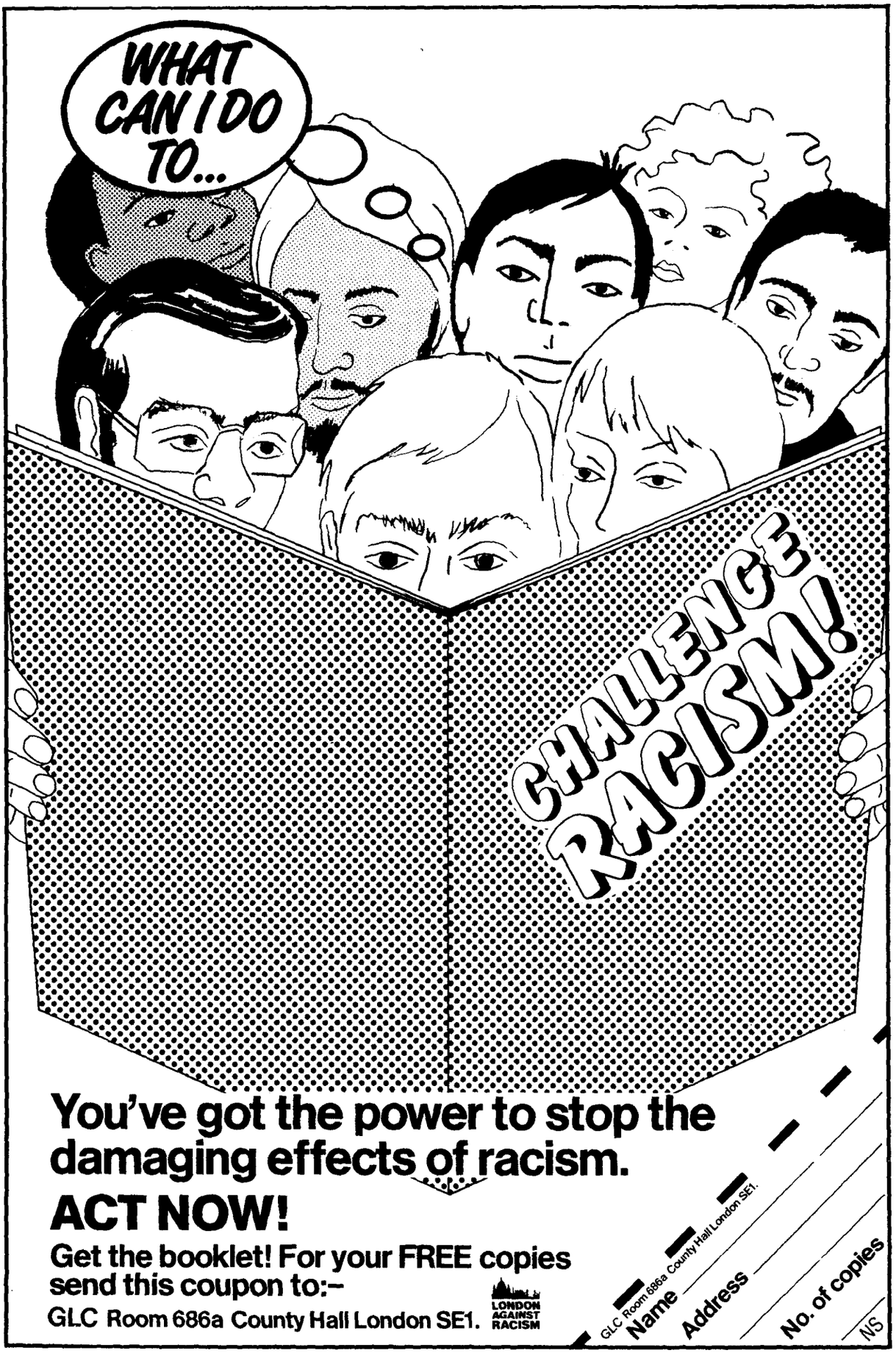
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John Minnion

INFERTILITY

Wanting babies

If the Warnock committee has neatly dissected the technology of test-tube babies, it has done it on a mass of undisturbed social assumptions suggests Hilary Rose

READING the Warnock Report* is to take pleasure in the elegance and lucidity of its presentation — a quality all too rare in government Blue Books. It feels a bit like a cool and rational seminar agreeably detached from that uncomfortable social world we actually inhabit, where unequal relations of power between the classes, genders and races threaten to make an untidy mockery of its abstractions. The very clarity of the Report in setting out the techniques to aid infertility, together with its assessment of the reasons for and against make it all the more possible to see what Warnock has left out.

A week into the debate we have all learned to use the terms, from artificial insemination by donor or husband to genuine surrogate motherhood. Such a rapid and mass educational process has been aided by the graphic contribution of television. Here, therefore, I want to concentrate on the social conservatism of a report which is ostensibly concerned with new moral issues arising from scientific change. On this, public commentators have had far less to say.

Let me begin with the questions of power and control. Warnock has swallowed, hook, line and sinker, the arguments of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, which sees the consultants as the final arbiters as to whether specific patients should receive infertility treatment:

> However, notwithstanding our view that every patient is entitled to advice and investigation of his or her fertility, we can see occasions where the consultant may, after discussion with his or her colleagues, consider that there are valid reasons why infertility treatment would not be in the best interests of the patient, the child that may be born following the treatment, or the patient's immediate family.

Now the problem for those of us who have real difficulty in looking to the consultants to identify the 'valid reason' and to act in 'her best interests' is the empirical evidence of their performance in that other vital area of a comprehensive reproduction service, abortion. What 'valid reason' can be offered by the consultants in West Midlands for their interpretation of the law to mean that only two in ten women entitled to a legal abortion get one on the NHS?

Percentage of abortions performed in NHS by selected regional authorities (1982)

Authority	%
Northern	88
Yorkshire	37
East Anglia	77
Thames (av)	46
Oxford	50
S Western	78
W Midlands	21
Wales	57

Source: OPCS

Warnock's suggestion that patients should be given 'reasons' for withholding treatment, and that they always have the right to a second opinion, does not measure up to the realities of medical power. There is no reason to think that the prejudices which determine a woman's abortion rights will mysteriously disappear when consultants are deciding on a woman's right to have a child. The rigour Warnock applied to new techniques should have been applied equally to the social reality of professional practice.

By framing the debate exclusively in terms of the control of the new technologies and with popular attention distracted by the wizardry of test-tube babies, it has become that much harder to discuss the broader questions of priorities. Ultimately the techniques of *in vitro* fertilisation are, for Warnock, means of ensuring the right of women (preferably in stable heterosexual relationships) to bear a healthy live child. If we ask what obstacles lie in the path of achieving that right, infertility, it is true, is one. But there are many others.

For instance, the health of a newborn infant is directly related to the state of the mother's health in pregnancy. In Britain today, as the 1980 Black report on Inequalities in Health showed, there are sharp regional and class gradients in perinatal mortality rates, so that if we could improve the perinatal conditions of working-class babies to the levels attained by the children of social class 1 parents in the south-east of England, many thousand wanted babies would survive each year. But such improvements do not raise glamorous moral or scientific questions, and Renée Short's report discussing such matters in the same week was almost ignored.

A similar question of priorities is raised by Warnock's moral dilemma over the rights of the embryo. The pragmatic guideline offered by the majority of the Committee, that experimentation is permissible up to but not beyond 14 days, takes for granted the importance of the scientific or medical questions which such experiments might address.

We are left with the implied claim that useful information about how to avoid the birth of babies with congenital or genetic defects might result from such experiments. True, it might, and any way of helping early diagnosis and hence the option of avoiding birth to a child suffering from Downs syndrome, or thalassaemia, or Duchenne's muscular dystrophy is surely to be welcomed. But I cannot help contrasting the enthusiasm for such new research with the coincidence that Warnock reported so shortly after the Medical Research Council terminated a Cambridge research group's work on that common cause of infant mortality — cot death.

Medical geneticists tend to overstress the importance of genetic factors in mental retardation; it is worth noting that amongst infants so badly damaged as to need institutionalising — and there are some 16,000 new admissions for mental handicap each year in Britain — clear genetic factors are known to be involved in perhaps 5 per cent. Yet research on the causes and treatments of non-genetic mental handicap is woefully underfinanced — it

*The report of the Committee of Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology, July 1984, chaired by Dame Mary Warnock.

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is just not a glamour area.

Again and again, Warnock's meticulous description of the available techniques and their biological basis is not matched by rigour in its discussion of social data, which is reduced to casual asides. Take the discussion of the scale of infertility — surely a central issue. The report quotes a 'folk-figure' of 1 in 10 couples, and candidly confesses that it does not know what proportion of these are infertile by choice as opposed to biology. Surely they could have commissioned research on this fundamental question?

But the dichotomy between human choice and biology is itself problematic, because the one certain thing about women's biology today is that it is not in a 'state of nature' but subject to continual interference. We do not know much of the control of fertility through prolonged use of the Pill, damage due to badly fitting coils or poorly performed abortions causes infertility.

Nor do we know how far the acute distress of infertility could be alleviated for some women in a society which valued them in their own right and offered them more out of life.

Because a central ethical concept within artificial fertilisation, is the 'donor', I was surprised that Warnock had not made more use of Richard Titmuss's pioneering work *The Gift Relationship*. There he demonstrates that only the genuinely voluntary gift from a person uninfluenced by motives of gain guarantees that the gift is 'safe'. Presciently, he suggests that genuine altruism, with all its positive implications for increasing social cohesiveness, can be brought into being by the advances of science and technology in the context of a universal health service.

Warnock's proposal to turn the acts of the staff and professionals who provide market fertility services into crimes (would that this might be extended to other privatised areas) is welcome; but it misses the point by including those who assist the altruistic act of one woman carrying the child of another for love.

Of course Warnock is right — but for the wrong reasons — to deny surrogate arrangements the status of legally binding contracts, for there is no way that the gift of love can be policed by law. But then, Warnock has some funny ideas about the equality of gifts. Just because in biology sperm and eggs are both gametes, Warnock attempts to persuade us that there is no difference between a man masturbating into a test-tube and a woman agreeing to the surgical removal of an egg with, however minimal, the attendant surgical risks.

Lastly I want to reflect on the relative silence of the feminist movement on the infertility issue. I think there are several reasons for this. Women have been excluded from science and technology, often withdrawing from its pressures into the embrace of the 'natural'. The women's movement has also, for good reason, felt highly critical of the ideology of compulsory motherhood; only relatively recently have feminists been able to acknowledge the pleasure of a genuinely wanted motherhood. The Warnock report may well act as the catalyst which will bring this overdue and needed debate about infertility to the surface. □

Hilary Rose is Professor of Social Policy at Bradford University.

TRAINING

Dying for a job

In the last four years 23 young people have been killed and 100 suffered amputations while on government youth training schemes. Quentin McDermott looks at the shocking cost of cheap labour

WHEN DAVID Brookes was given a placement under the Youth Training Scheme at the High Plains Outdoor Centre last September he thought he was lucky. He was, says his aunt Mrs Toni Green, 'a very very good young man'. Desperate for work he 'pedalled all over Newcastle looking for a job' and took the placement at the outdoor centre in Cumbria believing it would be an avenue to a proper job. He arrived on Monday 5 September. Two days later he was dead, having fallen 60 feet down a disused mineshaft.

'It was a senseless accident' says Mrs Green. 'He went away to High Plains on the Monday and came home the next Monday in a coffin. One thing that will always haunt me is having to identify him; it will never leave me.' David was one of four young people who died in the first 10 months of the Youth Training Scheme. Before them, 19 young people died in accidents on the Youth Opportunities Programme which YTS replaced. Between 1979 and 1983 there were 8,844 notifiable accidents on the YOP scheme, leading to amputations on more than one hundred of the young people. Altogether, 23 young people have died on the schemes, and a further 583 suffered serious injury.

It is a shocking toll, the starkest symbol of the criticisms already being made about the lack of proper supervision, training and protection for young people on the scheme.

At the time of David Brookes's death, several bodies shared a nominal responsibility for him: the Manpower Services Commission, which runs the YTS scheme; the North Tyneside District Council which acts as managing agent for the scheme, the Tyne and Wear Chamber of Commerce which sponsors the scheme, and the YMCA and Sunderland Education Authority which jointly run the High Plains Outdoor Centre. None accepts any responsibility for David's death, no one will be prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the inquest returned only a verdict of misadventure.

Although David's death was undoubtedly a 'misadventure' the fact that he was not carrying a torch inside the mine and that no one saw him fall down the shaft raises questions about the quality of supervision in a dangerous place. Yet the coroner ruled out many of the larger questions which the North Tyneside Council Education Committee wanted to ask, such as whether there had been previous accidents at the mine, and whether the party of youngsters had permission to be there. According to Councillor Byers, from the local authority, the narrow scope of the inquest was 'scandalous.'

The first young person to die on a YTS scheme was Anne Plummer, a 16-year old girl from Rutland who got a placement as a groom at stables owned by Joss Hanbury of Burley-on-Hill last summer. Mr Hanbury is Lord of the Manor of Oakham and Joint Master of the Cottesmore Foxhounds. Anne died just over a week after she began her traineeship when she fell from a horse under the wheels of an articulated lorry. The inquest returned a verdict of accidental death. Although Anne, an experienced rider, had gone to the stables to train as a groom she had spent most of her time that week doing manual farmwork.

Mr Plummer is concerned that his daughter was not being properly supervised on the road and, more generally, that the MSC is not ensuring the placements provide proper training. 'Anyone in this area will take someone off the scheme for cheap labour; you are very very fortunate if you're taught the job you're taken on for', he says. Mr Hanbury denies a lack of proper supervision but accepts: 'If they weren't cheap labour — let's face it — a lot of people wouldn't take them on.' But he stresses that the employer has to train them and had Anne arrived two months later, when he had more horses, she would have worked only as a groom.

After Anne Plummer died, the DHSS sent her parents a cheque for £65, in compensation. There was no covering letter.

David Brookes (shown here in a drama production) who took a YTS place last September believing it would be the avenue to a proper job. He died two days later

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The third YTS teenager to die was 17-year-old Gerald Corrigan from Coatbridge in Scotland. He was crushed to death under a forklift truck at Associated Deliveries Ltd on 12 October 1983. Gerald should not have been driving the truck — but the chargehand

Sheffield Newspapers Ltd

Derek Cain, aged 17, was killed by a paper mill shredder at Plumb and Co, Sheffield where he was a youth trainee

supervising him had not been told that the MSC had deleted the operation of fork-lift trucks from the syllabus. Under the fatal accident inquiry (the Scottish system for dealing with such deaths with a wider scope than English inquests) Sheriff John Boyle said the accident could have been avoided had there not been a 'weakness in communication between those devising the training courses and those implementing them', had safety precautions been enforced and had Gerald's activities that afternoon been supervised.

Gerald was not the first Coatbridge teenager to die on an MSC scheme. Under the different 'work skills' scheme, Sean O'Brien died in 1982 when his paraffin-soaked overalls were ignited by an industrial heater. Adequate supervision, said Sheriff Boyle, was 'sadly lacking'. At a court hearing last September, the firm Rosehall Engineering Works Ltd was fined £800 for breaches of safety law.

The fourth YTS trainee to die was 18-year-old Sarah Cannons, killed when her lung was punctured when a tractor backed into her on a farm in Wiltshire. The inquest returned a verdict of accidental death. The HSE inspector, Henry Luke, said if Sarah had not stood beside the tractor and if the barn door had been tied back, the accident could have been avoided.

THIS SERIES of four unpublicised teenage deaths would be less telling if under the preceding YOP scheme 19 teenagers had not been killed. A public fuss has been made about two of these young men, Derek Cain of Sheffield and Andrew Lewis from South Wales. Derek, aged 17, died while operating a paper shredding machine for Plumb & Co, a small firm with only four full-time employees. Derek was crushed in the machine which he was not expected by the MSC to operate. The firm, which was not registered with the Factory Inspectorate, was subsequently fined £2,500 for seven breaches of the Factories Act in a prosecution brought under the health and safety laws.

Derek's father, Richard Cain, has now issued writs against the Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission. His son's death has received more publicity than most because he has campaigned over it. The death of 16-year-old Andrew Lewis, also a YOP trainee, was the subject of the only official internal inquiry into any of the deaths, because it was taken up by his MP, Michael Foot. Andrew was killed while operating a bag flattening machine at U-Save (Insulation) Ltd, a small firm in Ebbw Vale, in December 1982. The inquest returned a verdict of accidental death and the Health and Safety Executive, after an investigation, decided not to prosecute the firm.

Andrew was taken on by the firm as a laboratory trainee. However, unknown to the Careers Office, which sent him to the scheme, U-Save had asked that the programme be changed to include general factory process work. An MSC official agreed to the change but, in the words of the Department of Employment report, had 'almost certainly' forgotten to tell the Careers Office that what had been a traineeship in laboratory work would now include general factory work.

Mr and Mrs Lewis say that had they known this, they would not have allowed their son to take part. But in April this year, the MSC Youth Training Directorate noted employers would 'doubtless object' to parents inspecting premises and machinery, and recommended that parental consent should not have to be sought for entry to the YTS.

In 'compensation' for their son's death, the Lewises received a cheque for £78 accompanied by a letter which, in the words of the report, 'caused Mr and Mrs Lewis considerable distress.'

Whether or not this series of deaths and serious, maiming injury is significantly higher than the national average is a matter of dispute. The sort of detailed breakdowns of both youth trainee placements and of accidents which would allow valid comparisons are still not available. But in an attempt to improve the safety record, the MSC has hired nine part-time regional safety specialists at £90 a day to advise on safety measures.

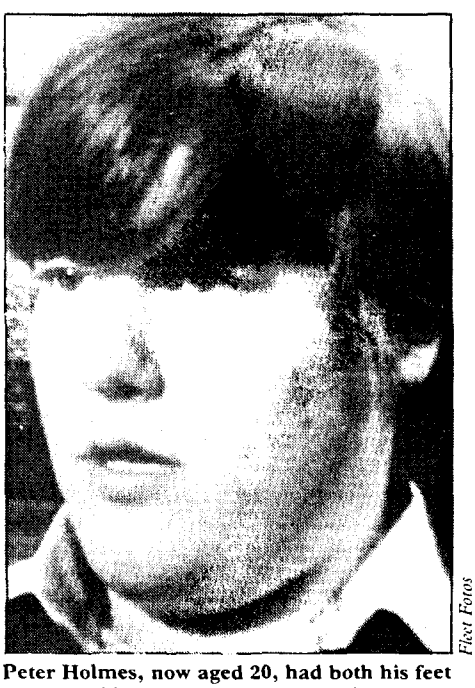
But the MSC employs no full-time safety staff in any of its 55 area offices. More important in the long run has been the government cut in the factory inspectorate from 980 in 1980 to 825 this year meaning that factories get inspected only once every seven years, and dangerous places once every three. The MSC's failure, points out Paul Lewis of Youthaid, is that it will not accept direct responsibility for the safety of the premises to which it sends young people, requiring only that its managing agents register with the relevant Health and Safety body.

UNEMPLOYED youngsters are highly aware that the so-called trainee schemes are in fact offering them little by way of proper training. By the end of May this year there were 233,083 youths on YTS places — just over half the 442,000 places approved. Yet if they don't take up a place on the scheme young people, despite all the assurances that it is not compulsory, are likely to get their benefit cut. In the six months from December 1983 to June this year 7,919 young people had their benefit cut for 'unreasonably' refusing to accept a place or for leaving one early.

It is not only cheap for the employers — some pay the trainees little or nothing on top of the government grant; it is also working out relatively cheap for the government. Far from spending the much trumpeted £1 billion per year on youth training, this year's actual figure is nearer £740 million. From that must be taken away the £300 million in saved social security payments, as well as money indirectly saved through the abolition of the 17 Industrial Training Boards, and the direct contribution of £71 million this year from the EEC's social fund.

A growing number of trade unions, such as the NUM, NGA, POEU, NUPE and SOGAT are either refusing to co-operate with the scheme, or agreeing to it only if the young people are taken on at proper rates of pay with full trade union rights. Youthaid, a charity, is lobbying to improve the rights and conditions of the trainees. The Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign, set up by Labour Party Young Socialists, has produced a Safety Charter and a national petition calling for improved rights for trainees.

Meanwhile, unless trade unions do rebel against the scheme altogether at this year's September TUC — as several are threatening to do — it seems inevitable that thousands of young people, desperate for 'an opportunity' will continue to provide cheap labour for thousands of employers unable, or unwilling, to offer better conditions. As the MSC's chairman David Young said: 'The youth rates of pay are far too high in Britain. The young should be a source of cheap labour because they can be trained on the job.' □



Fleet Fotos

Peter Holmes, now aged 20, had both his feet severed while working as a YOP trainee, aged 17, at a soap-making firm, Limbus Laboratories. Peter had been asked to clean the inside of a mincing machine; while he was inside, someone accidentally switched it on

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ASBESTOS

New brooms

Turner and Newall would rather spend £1m on its new chairman than on making a factory safe. Angela Singer exposes the dangerous working conditions

EARLIER THIS year, MPs were invited to a cocktail party at the House of Commons to celebrate the launch of 'Duracem' building materials, the world's first complete range of asbestos-free boards and sheets made by TAC Construction Materials, part of Turner and Newall, Britain's largest asbestos company.

In its invitation to the MPs, the company referred to 'the ongoing saga of suggested health hazards associated with asbestos cement products.' The company explained: 'The anti-asbestos lobby has continued to influence public opinion to such an extent that TAC, despite believing that any health risk associated with asbestos cement was minimal, has responded to public demand in the way one would expect from any company of integrity.'

The company now excudes not only honour, but profits, a handsome proportion of which — almost £1 million — will have gone to chairman Sir Francis Tombs as his reward for putting the company back into profit.

For lack of a similar sum, workers at T & N's Rochdale factory, TBA Industrial Products Ltd, are breathing in the factory's polluted air through ineffectual respirators, sweeping up asbestos waste with brooms and going home with asbestos dust on their clothes. In the past 12 months the factory inspectorate has visited the factory 12 times and has demanded a long list of improvements.

Sir Francis, appointed in November 1982, has taken Turner and Newall from a loss of £72 million in 1982 to a profit of £8.5 million the next year. This recovery has been effected by selling off parts of the company to pay off heavy bank loans. Other loans have been rescheduled.

THE RELIGION OF TRUTH

Truth is that which is. Our being aware more fully of this reality is a matter of the development of the relevant but normally dormant faculties. We can know much more about the inner and spiritual realms of nature than is generally realised. The religion of truth is a matter of direct experience rather than adherence to dogma and belief.

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There has also been the search for new, asbestos-free products and a policy of reduced capital spending. Without more spending, the Rochdale textiles factory cannot conform to the more stringent standards for working with asbestos which the Health and Safety Executive is introducing on 1 August.

UNTIL a year ago, the level of white asbestos in the air which the Health and Safety Executive deemed safe was two fibres per millilitre of air. The catalyst for the reduction to one fibre — three years after it was urged by the government's Advisory Committee on Asbestos — was the television programme *Alice: the Fight for life.* This showed the link between all types of asbestos and mesothelioma, cancer of the lung and stomach linings. The disease is always fatal and asbestos is its only known cause. The industry still denies that the connection is fatal.

From next month, the level will be halved again, to 0.5 fibres. This, says the HSE, will give Britain the strictest asbestos safety standard in the world. But it is a standard which cannot be reached using the present methods and equipment in many parts of the Rochdale asbestos textiles factory. The workers in those areas will have to wear respirators — and the respirators in current use have been found by the factory inspectorate to be ineffective.

The inspectorate has asked the company to identify employees for whom the respirators currently issued do not provide a satisfactory face fit. Any gaps between the apparatus and the nose, chin, or cheek bones defeat the purpose. But a respirator which fits properly will build up such a degree of heat inside it that it will be unbearable if worn for much longer than an hour. Workers are inclined to wear them loosely, dangerously and comfortably.

The company's answer is that it will provide a wider range of respirators and better training for supervisors. The General Municipal and Boilermakers Union, which has 800 members at TBA, would prefer to see the dust level reduced at source.

This could be done by improving exhaust ventilation, enclosing machinery, using portable vacuum cleaners instead of brushes, and automatic removal of waste from machines. The company estimates this would cost £¾ million and it is reluctant to spend this.

In areas where controlling the hazard at source is not practical, the GMB would like to see ventilated visors, a much more effective piece of breathing apparatus recommended by the Grant Report, commissioned by the government after the *Alice* programme. These resemble a motor-cycle helmet, covering the whole head, and have an air line which blows cool air over the face.

Although the company says it has spent £3 million in recent years on new individually enclosed carding machines, some of the old, unenclosed machines are still in use. The union is also pressing for automatic waste removal systems from the carding machines — where the fibre is teased or combed out. At present an employee has to go under the machine about twice a shift to clean it, and gets covered in dust, a danger factor raised by the factory inspectorate after a visit this year.

The inspectorate has also expressed its concern about the lack of exhaust ventilation at sewing machines. It wants a ban on the use of brushes for cleaning floors, inside walls, ceilings and ledges.

Protective clothing does not properly cover home clothing, the inspectorate says. Women wear knee-length smocks over their jeans which they keep on to go home, and there is no effective separation between the clean and dirty sides of the changing rooms.

A press officer for Turner and Newall said brushes were now used mainly where there were sticky deposits of asbestos, and it was hoped brushes would be eliminated by the end of the year. But the Health and Safety Executive told the *New Statesman*: 'We have made a number of visits, the most recent being in mid-June. The company is still using brooms and a programme of getting rid of them is being carried out at our insistence. In law they are obliged to use a dustless method for cleaning asbestos. The company has argued that oiled brushes are a dustless method, but we want the brushes replaced by vacuums.'

OF COURSE, the shareholders in Turner and Newall are concerned about such things. Public disquiet after the *Alice* programme caused the share price to drop. They thus have cause to be grateful for the salvage operation carried out by Sir Francis Tombs, worth every penny of the £940,000 he is likely to earn from his three-year contract.

The group of 15 banks that stepped in to save the company promised Sir Francis £20,000 for every 1p Turner and Newall shares rose between 23p, (the approximate price when he took over) and 50p. Sir Francis's reputation as a tough trouble-shooter has helped to keep the price between 50p and 100p almost since he took over. If the price holds up, he stands to make £540,000 on top of his salary, which in 1983 was £51,107.

In addition, he has an option, described by the *Daily Telegraph* as 'unusual', to buy 500,000 shares at 23p, about a third of their current value, from the company's major shareholder, Prudential Assurance, which owns five per cent of the shares. The Tombs-Rothschild-Prudential team which rescued Turners is a familiar City combination with a reputation for boldly going where no other investor will go — and producing a profitable return. They came together to buy up the government's stake in Celltech, Britain's leading genetic engineering company: Tombs as a 'watchdog' on the board, Rothschild merchant bank providing the investment management and the Pru providing the money.

Tombs has said he doesn't know why there is such a fuss about his Turners pay as 'people win this amount on the pools every day'.

Last month Donald Robinson died aged 42 of mesothelioma. He had worked at Turners since he was 17. He had been optimistic about surviving the disease two years ago after having a lung removed. But no one has survived it. He left a widow and four children aged three to 15.

The year Sir Francis was appointed, 1982, Donald Robinson received £75,000 as compensation. Sir Francis, who is also on the board of Rolls-Royce, Shell UK and Rothschilds, will receive for three years' work more than 10 times what Mr Robinson got for having his life cut short by 40 years and never seeing his children grow up. □

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DIARY

Anna Coote

I've been reading about a man who is heir to a kingdom standing among young unemployed people, handing out advice. If they want jobs, says the Prince of Wales, they should smarten up: 'Try to concentrate on coming across well in the interview'. He must be recalling the last time he turned up in leather and Doc Martens — to be passed over for a smoothie in a sports jacket. I suppose it's one of the perks of royalty that you never suffer a twinge of liberal guilt. He even tells them he *knows* how boring, frustrating and demoralising life can be. Not a glimmer of self-doubt, just out with it. Fling the pearls before the jobless swine. An obscene spectacle, slavishly recorded by *The Times*.

○

The summer break has started. Under grey skies a river boat sets out from Kingston-upon-Thames, bearing a turkey the size of a fat four-year-old, gallons of wine and the works outing from Diverse Reports, Channel Four's multifarious current affairs show. It threatens rain. Someone has suggested mischievously that there could be a bomb on the boat, because our last programme dealt sympathetically with the case of the Ulster integrationists. It doesn't rain and there isn't a bomb. A happy day indeed.

I am glad the holidays are here. It's no picnic being midwife to an *enfant terrible* week after week. We're the slot (in case you've missed it) that tries to pioneer politically committed journalism. We don't pretend to produce 'impartial' programmes, but we are obliged by the broadcasting authorities to 'balance' them across the series. Our journalists have different political views and they present, with varying degrees of success and failure, a diversity of reports. Someone (not I) could write quite a witty novel about the contortions we get ourselves into. It's a bit like trying to produce the *New Statesman* one week and the *Spectator* the next — from the same company, in the same building, with the same staff.

Why, you may wonder, aren't there two series, or more, each produced by a different company, from different perspectives? I understand the IBA won't countenance that. It's surely time for a change in the broadcasting regulations — one that credits the viewers with a bit more intelligence.

○

I may be getting obsessive about the whole thing. Television has that effect on people. It swallows you up, demands all your time and energy. Doors and windows shut behind you. You forget what it's like in the big world, and when you go out there to make programmes about it, you don't so much join it as colonise it. I thought print journalism was a self-important business, but it can't compare to this — and I only inhabit the dissident suburbs of the television community: think what it must be like downtown!

Why is it such an exclusive, mesmerising culture? Most people who work in television have a sense that it is peculiarly *important*, because of its influence as a mass medium. The stakes are high. You play not only for a share in the power of the medium, but also for the glory of being associated with recognised people and programmes. And for big cash prizes.

○

The technical process demands that you seldom leave the company of other television people. It's not just the reporter and the typewriter. It's the reporter and the researcher and the director and the camera operator and the sound recordist and the graphics designer and the editor and the dubbing mixer and the engineer. That's the bare minimum. Often, there's a larger team — and necessarily so. The object of the exercise can thus be less absorbing than the exercise itself, at least until the editing stage, when your material is captive and at your command.

Over the last year I've worked with several people from outside television, who have contributed to our programme. One by one, I've watched them crumple under the tyranny of the production process. They never dreamed that it would take six weeks' hard labour to produce a report that could be realised in print within six days. All that effort — for what? You gain bigger audiences. You lose the chance to convey information: television abhors facts. You gain the immeasurable impact of visual images. You lose the subtlety and precision of written language.

ROGER WODDIS

Pig talk

A woman denied a managerial post had her claim of sexual discrimination upheld by an industrial tribunal in Liverpool after producing a note written by her male interviewer with the words 'good screw'.

These women! What an attitude!
You'd think they'd show their gratitude
For being told they make a fellow throb.
She should have said, 'You flatter me:
Admiring my anatomy
Means so much more than giving me a job.'

They really are incredible.
What's wrong with being beddable
And looking like a million from behind?
A woman's personality
Depends on sexuality:
Her body is what matters, not her mind.

I tell you, there's no pleasing them.
By groping them and squeezing them
We help the little darlings to relax.
And those who are employable
Must find it quite enjoyable —
Though God knows what they say behind our backs!

○

We British are well placed to make sour observations about women at the top. So who's impressed with Geraldine Ferraro's appointment? She's known as a party hack, not as a champion of women's causes. But you'd have thought, if you've been following the recent coverage, that this idea of a female running-mate was just some last-minute wheeze on Mondale's part. On the contrary, as Barbara Ehrenreich has pointed out (NS 15 June), it is the consequence of a massive campaign, fought over many years, by US women's organisations. Ferraro may not be the greatest gift to feminism and she may not have been Mondale's first choice, but her candidacy is undoubtedly the product of a feminist lobby. *That's* impressive. We could do with something like that here.

○

It's good to find Kim Sabido reporting for ITN again. More than good, it's phenomenal. Early last summer he sustained terrible head injuries in a motor-cycle accident, while he was on holiday in Greece. The Greek doctors wrote him off. He would have died if he hadn't been flown back to London, just in the nick of time. Several months later, *TV Eye* did a programme about the near-failure of his holiday insurance cover. It included the tragic spectacle of Kim, a distinguished reporter who'd covered the Falklands war, trying (unsuccessfully) to remember where the Prime Minister lived. He was better than he had been, but his memory was wrecked. Soon afterwards, the rehabilitation centre he was attending told his girlfriend Scarlett MccGwire that he would never fully recover: he would be, at least partly, a cabbage.

Scarlett responded by taking him away from the rehabilitation centre and arranging with friends for him to work at the magazine *City Limits*. He did odd jobs for them and gradually started to write news stories. It was a turning point. He built up confidence and his memory steadily improved. By January he was well enough to go back to ITN and they've recently put him on the regular reporters' roster. He and Scarlett are due to have a baby any day now.

I visited him when he was semi-conscious in hospital, more than a year ago. Scarlett was there and he couldn't remember her name. She told me then, with a kind of desperate confidence, that she would get him back to ITN as a reporter. In a sense, his recovery seems like a triumph of her will.

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Nuclear fission

The Labor Party seems to have sold out on nuclear issues. Margaret Smith reports on Bob Hawke's bitterly contested move to the right

CANBERRA's Lakeside Hotel was the scene this month for one of the most explosive Biennial National Conferences that the Australian Labor Party has ever seen. Hundreds of demonstrators chanted outside and then stormed the building during the debates on uranium mining and on the future of US bases in Australia.

A jubilant, though exhausted, Prime Minister Bob Hawke in his final speech congratulated the party's president — Premier Neville Wran of New South Wales — for the way he had handled the passionate debate. In the end party unity was maintained. But after the decisions on allowing limited uranium mining, the continuation of US bases under the ANZUS treaty and the entry of foreign banks to the Australian financial system, the Left were clearly in an unhappy mood. 'I've always been despondent about this government. Really, it's just a small "l" Liberal government', said one prominent Federal minister afterwards.

The most prophetic warning about the government's drift to the right came from Frank Walker, one of Wran's ministerial colleagues in NSW. It was on the uranium issue. 'Of all the debates before the ALP, this is the most momentous. What we are about to decide affects not only every member of the ALP and every Australian. It also affects the future of the human race.'

Australia has huge uranium reserves. The Roxby Downs mine in South Australia has reserves of 1.2 million tons, making it the largest uranium mine in the world. By just six votes the conference gave the go ahead to a new mine there, with two existing mines (Ranger and Nabarlek) being allowed to fulfil existing contracts.

Bob Hawke's own position has always been clear. He told the conference: 'We are not going to stop uranium mining and deny the Australian people the wealth from that mining'. He never explains just how 'the people' will benefit. He quotes 'the polls' and stresses that they have shown that Australians are for uranium mining.

But the rank-and-file of the ALP overwhelmingly reject his argument. Recently a survey of 172 branches found that 152 opposed uranium mining. The ALP itself came to power in March 1983 on a platform committed to phasing it out. 'We are now showing contempt for that trust that the rank and file and the electorate had in us', said Frank Walker. He cited the largest street demonstrations since the Vietnam War and the emergence of new political parties, such as the Nuclear Disarmament Party.

He challenged the party not to believe 'this nonsense that the disillusioned have nowhere to go. That is what the Social Democrats thought in Germany as the Green Party eroded their base, because of their inability to understand the politics of mass movements'. He went on Cassandra-like: 'The new politics of pragmatism and appearance seem to mean that we forsake many of the long term and cherished principles of the Labor movement. I can only hope that the growing conflict will not be so divisive that it will bring us down.'

Indeed to some it looked as if only on the issues of abortion, Aboriginal land rights and 'ethnic' affairs that the ALP remained true to its platform as a democratic socialist party. The inclusion of the 'abortion on demand' policy was a momentus decision for the ALP and one that had been fought long and hard. Over ethnic affairs, the party upheld its position of maintaining the current quota of Asian immigration, though this wasn't a particularly radical posture — especially in view of the opposition Liberal Party's increasingly racist stand in favour of European immigration.

Ironically, the Labor Party's positive attitude towards the Aborigines is seen by some Aborigines to be having harmful effects. Paul Coe of Sydney's Aboriginal Legal Service thinks that the ALP's uranium policy is making Aborigines in the 'top end' of Australia dependent on uranium mining royalties. 'They see themselves in a position of dependence — their economic viability has become tied to uranium mining, now that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs no longer funds their community projects.' He is worried that the splits in the Labor Party over future uranium mining will soon be mirrored in the Aboriginal community. The buying of the Aboriginal vote on uranium is possibly the most serious issue facing Aboriginal Australians. Some see it as the most devastating form of corruption since alcohol was first introduced. The Aborigines were also upset by the reference in the new platform document to the granting of land to them to be held in 'secure tenure'. The previous ALP commitment had been to give them 'inalienable freehold title'. Thus at one stroke of the pen the ALP had shifted on Aboriginal land tenure to the policy of the previous Fraser government, under the Peacock leadership the opposition has now moved ever further to the right in its 'reappraisal' of the justice of granting land rights at all.

Manning Clark, the Australian historian, sees the problem as being similar to that faced by all democratic socialist parties today. 'If they were in power, what would they do? The Left needs to think again how do you create a society in which every adult has an equal vote in how she/he lives.'

However, the Socialist Left's dilemma in Australia is compounded by the nature of the Australian psyche. Clark explains: 'Except for the Aborigines, we're an immigrant society and

Camera Press

The Aborigines' vote has been bought by the Labor Party with uranium mining royalties

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pre-disposed to 'getting on'. There's a great emphasis on petty bourgeois values, such as owning your own house on a block of land. We're conformist and racist and Australia's isolation from Europe and its convict beginnings, have caused a sense of inferiority. But gradually there has grown a new optimism and sense of achievement and Hawke has captured that. The problem for Hawke or any leader is that if he loses touch with the people, he just walks into the night.' □

POLAND

Grip of irony

Gary Mead sees the amnesty as a device to avoid fair trials

POLAND'S AMNESTY will release 652 acknowledged political prisoners — most of them awaiting trial — and 35,000 common criminals. It marks the 40th anniversary of communist rule in Poland — a grim irony, since the nation's self-appointed leaders have come full circle in the space of four decades. Forty years ago thousands of resistance fighters who happened not to be communist were being locked away, some never to survive.

The terms of the amnesty are harsh. Everyone released is warned that, should they commit a similar 'offence' before the end of 1986, they will be back inside so fast they won't know the time of day. And then their original charges will stand.

Many people are wondering why so many ordinary criminals are being freed. Partly it's an attempt by the regime to suggest its humanity. Partly it's a clumsy way of tarring the politicals with the same brush as the thieves, drunks and hooligans. But although the criminals will return to civilian life to find a society they can easily recognise — graft and petty criminality being as much as part of today's Poland as ever before — the politicals will find many changes from the heady days of 1980 and 1981. In no sense can this amnesty be claimed as a victory for Solidarity, although it is a belated victory for some form of political common sense.

For one thing, it is infuriating to be 'amnestied' when you have not had a fair trial to begin with, or — as for the majority of the politicals — any trial at all. In any society with a reasonable judicial system, the kind of 'probation' that the people going free will face is imposed *after* a court process, as a form of judicial punishment. The situation for them now is that there is an implicit assumption that they were all guilty of a crime, and that they may face serious penalties if they commit such a crime again. In other words, the amnesty itself is a form of punishment without trial. (This form of Polish justice is today quite normal — it happened to me, when I was forced to leave Poland last year.)

Take the most famous case, of the four members of KOR, the Workers' Self-Defence Committee. Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, Henryk Wugec and Zbigniew Romaszewski have spent most of the last two years in prison on charges of trying to topple the political system by violent force.

Their trial opened on 13 July, but was immediately adjourned. They will now go free — with mixed feelings, happy to be outside, but angry that they have spent so much time inside, for nothing. Angry too that they have been denied the right to refute the absurd charges against them. The same is true for the seven regional chairmen of Solidarity, who have also spent most of the time since December 1981 jail. Of course, none of them will have any right to claim compensation from the state for wrongful arrest. How could they, when according to the implications of the amnesty, they were guilty of crimes anyway?

THE AMNESTY is a typical piece of Jaruzelski 'cleverness'. The regime's clemency has more to do with cash than ethics. Last week Jaruzelski admitted that Western sanctions against Poland after martial law was imposed have cost the country $13 billion in lost trade revenue.

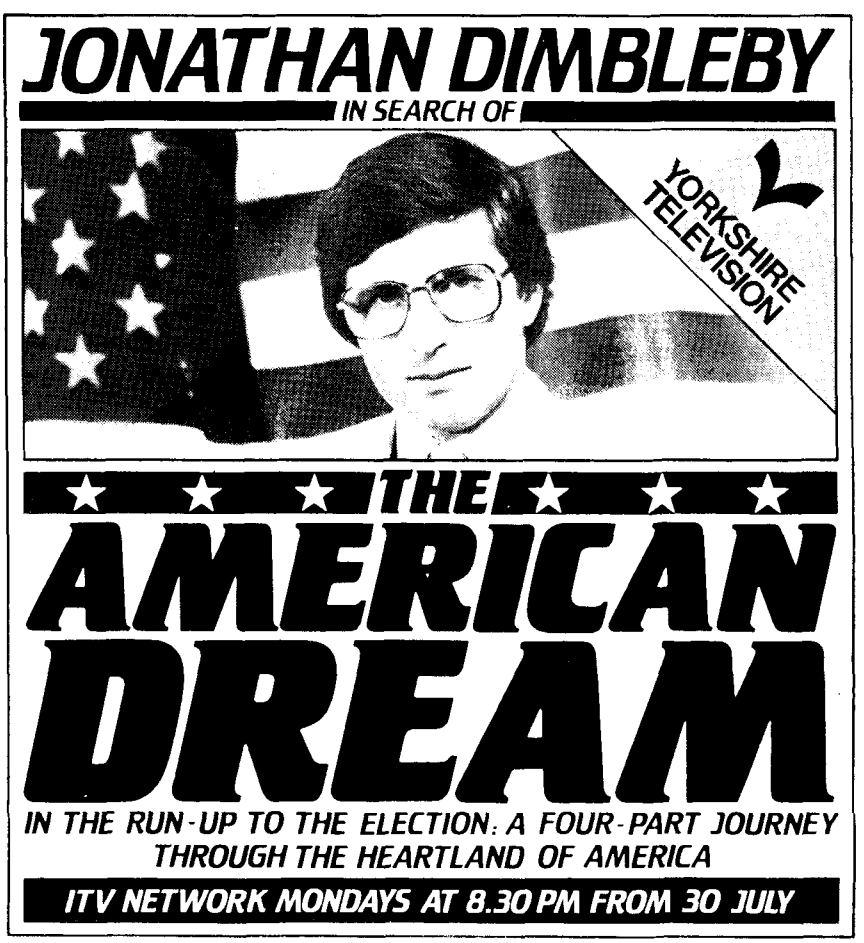
Warsaw hopes that by releasing the politicals it can achieve several things: it can appear to respond to the West's call for their release; it can place Solidarity's underground in a tricky position, since the 652 people released from jail will have to be politically silent or risk going straight back inside; and it hopes to persuade the West to start the flow of cash and credits once more.

Solidarity's underground certainly now faces a real dilemma — should it back off, or carry on its opposition? The amnesty offers a chance for underground activists to come out in the open, but at a price. They will have to make a complete confession before they can benefit from its dubious terms, giving the security services exactly the information they want.

In any case, one of the most striking developments in Poland today is the growth of 'freelance' secret police activities. There are documented reports of 'Anti-Solidarity Organisations' in various regions, formed by secret police. These have issued leaflets and conducted raids, abducting people suspected of helping the underground and then terrorising them for days. Cases are on record of kidnappings in Torun and elsewhere. It takes only a few such examples to put fear into a community.

The regime's policy over the last two years has been to prevent any repetition of the events of August 1980 by institutionalising all the important martial law decrees. Built into the new legislation are various anti-worker laws that make strikes virtually impossible, that impose a form of censorship unknown since Stalinism, and that make job security dependent on political passivity. Under the surface of amnesty and humanity, the network of state informers has multiplied, murders and beatings go on in mysterious circumstances, and debilitating suspicion and fear is spread.

The 652 prisoners will all be home by the end of August with their stories of beating, medical neglect, and intimidation in jail — tales to daunt even the most courageous, or so the regime hopes. Poland is celebrating 40 years of communism by the hollowest attempt yet to try to kid the West that things are returning to normal. Perhaps they are, indeed. □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EL SALVADOR

Ballot blots

Simon North on Britain's role in a democratic fiction

ON 22 DECEMBER last year a small item appeared on the back page of the *Daily Telegraph*, under the heading 'Kissinger in Talks with Thatcher'. Henry Kissinger, former American Secretary of State, had had a 70-minute discussion with Mrs Thatcher and Sir Geoffrey Howe at No 10.

The *Telegraph* was the only paper to carry the story. 'No details of their discussion were given, but it seems certain that the major and perhaps only topic was Central America.' For Kissinger, this unusually low-key stopover in London was shrouded in secrecy.

Last Saturday El Salvador's President Duarte dropped in for a day of talks with Mrs Thatcher at Chequers. The two events are linked. For Central America — and in particular El Salvador — is becoming a central issue in this year's US Presidential election campaign. So far as the US Administration is concerned, both visits seem to have been an unqualified success.

Last year, at President Reagan's request, Kissinger chaired a bipartisan commission on Central America. It was crucial to the Reagan-Kissinger strategy for El Salvador that there should be international endorsement of the Salvadorian presidential elections, which took place in two stages in March and May, as a 'genuine step' towards 'democracy'.

Most European countries refused to send observers to those elections on the grounds that, because the country is in a state of civil war and because of its appalling record on human rights, genuine elections were not possible. Britain was only one of four European countries to validate the elections by sending 'independent' observers.

Britain appointed two observers charged with 'maintaining independence of both British and El Salvadorean governments'. One of these was Sir James Swaffield, recently retired Director-General of the GLC, who cannot speak Spanish and has no special knowledge of Latin American affairs. The other was Dr David Browning, a geographer from Oxford, who has written a book and several articles on land reform in El Salvador.

Dr Browning's relationship with El Salvador, however, extends beyond a mere academic interest and calls into question the appropriateness of his appointment as an independent observer. He is godfather to the son of the previous President of El Salvador, Magana; is a long standing friend of President Duarte; he is married to an El Salvadorean; and he is a close friend of the De Sola family, owners of the largest coffee processing firm in El Salvador, and backers of Duarte's Christian Democratic party.

Last year the El Salvador Committee for Human Rights (ESCHR), an organisation with no political allegiance, criticised as partisan an article Browning had written on 'Agrarian Reform in El Salvador' for the *Journal for Latin American Affairs*. The article concluded that 'fundamental agrarian reform' was taking place in El Salvador.

The Christian Democrats' policy for redistribution of land resources in El Salvador is one of its main 'shop window' programmes, designed to satisfy critical opinion in the US and elsewhere that progress is being made to reduce social injustice. Using Browning's own figures, ESCHR demonstrated that the amount of acreage affected and the number of beneficiaries from the land reform programme were so small as to be insignificant. Neil Macdonald of ESCHR told the *New Statesman*: 'Browning interpreted as a success a programme which by his own figures is clearly a failure'.

ON THEIR RETURN from El Salvador, after the elections in May, Swaffield and Browning submitted a report. 'While in itself the election does not provide the solution to the country's problems, its conduct and the degree of popular participation does indicate that the majority of Salvadoreans do reject those extreme groups, Left and Right, who seek their political ends by means of violence and terrorism'. This conclusion does not accord with the facts, even as the report relates them.

It is not possible to say anything about what the *majority* of El Salvadoreans thought, since less than half of them voted — in an election where voting was compulsory. A fifth of El Salvador (which is the size of Wales) is occupied by the FLMN, the 'liberated zone', where no voting took place. There are 600,000 refugees outside the country and 400,000 internal refugees, displaced by the civil war, who could not vote. According to Swaffield and Browning's report, 'the existence of an accurate register would have given a degree of credibility to this election', but no such register was produced in time.

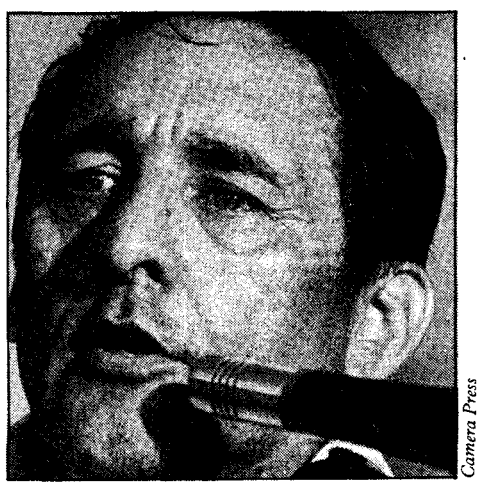
The report says: 'Intimidation inside and outside the electoral process undoubtedly made difficult the conduct of a free and secure election; but our conclusion is that it did not make it impossible'. Human rights organisations have assessed that the commonest cause of death in El Salvador (where there is an infant mortality rate of 6 per cent) is assassination by right-wing death squads.

The ARENA (extreme right-wing) party was the main rival to Duarte's Christian Democrats and is closely linked with the death squads. The British report does not mention (as did its Dutch equivalent) that ARENA voters were told not to fold their ballot papers in half. Since the ballot boxes, provided by a US company, were made of transparent glass and the polling stations were staffed by the political parties themselves, including ARENA members, it was possible for them to oversee the way people voted.

Swaffield and Browning acknowledged that voting on the day was chaotic — 'many voting stations did not open at the appointed time and some did not open at all'. (Duarte himself spent three hours looking for a polling station where he could cast his vote). Yet they conclude that the election 'was an adequate means of allowing the people a free choice of their preferred candidate'. They do not consider the possibility of US interference in the elections, even though it was leaked at the time that the CIA had provided the US preferred candidate, Duarte, with $920,000 and its second bet, Guerrero, with $460,000.

In October, BIG PINE THREE will take place — the biggest military 'exercise' yet, involving US, Honduran and El Salvadorean troops. The timing of the exercise — a month before the US elections — the increased US military aid to El Salvador and attempts to remove refugee camps from the Honduras-El Salvador border have done nothing to allay the worries of those who fear that El Salvador may become the Vietnam of Central America.

Meanwhile, though, Britain announced that it would be opening its Embassy in El Salvador. □



Camera Press

President Napoleon Duarte: gets a free British embassy with every 'democratic' election

El Salvador's death toll

Political killings of civilians by army, security forces, paramilitary squads and civil defence forces

Occupation	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Peasants	67	893	7,916	1,683	212
Workers	108	1,250	864	210	127
Students	36	479	543	78	42
Teachers	11	109	72	13	8
Employees	n.a.	n.a.	376	164	84
Shopkeepers	n.a.	n.a.	106	102	83
Professionals	9	105	42	16	23
Non-identified/Others	918	10,358	6,564	3,574	5,020
Total	1,149	13,194	16,537	5,840	5,599

Source: Human Rights Commission of El Salvador. Figures are for reported deaths. Total figures of deaths would thus be much higher.

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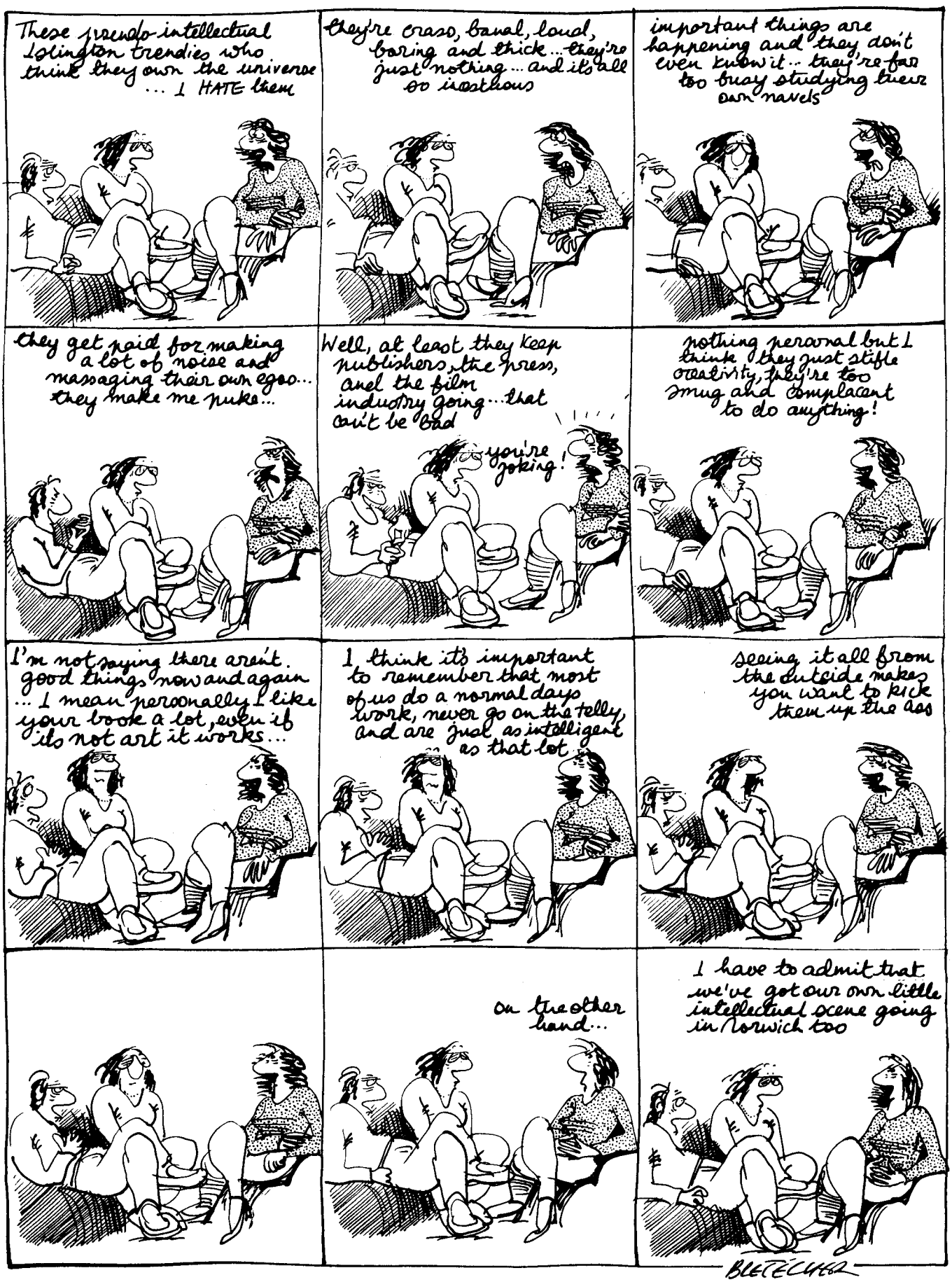
BRETECHER

NATIONAL PROVINCIAL


These pseudo-intellectual Islington trendies who think they own the universe ... I HATE them
They're crass, banal, loud, boring and thick ... they're just nothing ... and it's all so loathsome
important things are happening and they don't even know it ... they're far too busy studying their own navels
they get paid for making a lot of noise and massaging their own egos ... they make me puke ...
Well, at least they keep publishers, the press, and the film industry going ... that can't be bad
you're joking!
nothing personal but I think they just stifle creativity, they're too smug and complacent to do anything!
I'm not saying there aren't good things now and again ... I mean personally I like your book a lot, even if it's not art it works ...
I think it's important to remember that most of us do a normal days work, never go on the telly, and are just as intelligent as that lot ...
seeing it all from the outside makes you want to kick them up the ass
on the other hand ...
I have to admit that we've got our own little intellectual scene going in Norwich too
BRETECHER

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LETTERS

Defence: can we afford it?

Martin Shaw, Hull

Peter Kellner's critical judgment has failed him in his blanket endorsement of Labour's proposed defence 'compromise' (*NS* 20 July). It is not necessary to be a pacifist, anti-American and 'soft on Russia', or even in favour of immediate withdrawal from NATO to question two fundamental ingredients.

First, the rapid integration of conventional and nuclear forces by NATO (and indeed the UK itself) means we *must* question the role of many conventional forces, whose use would rapidly escalate to nuclear war. There is an immense gulf between the proposals for non-provocative defence, put forward in your pages by Frank Barnaby and by the Alternative Defence Commission, and the offensive use of conventional forces envisaged by much current NATO thinking (and presupposed in proposals to increase the Alliance's conventional forces).

Second, it by no means follows that a coherent conventional defence policy must be a more expensive one. We *must* question the historically high levels of defence spending achieved under Mrs Thatcher — most of it on conventional rather than nuclear forces. Britain's spending has risen in the last 5 years from 4.9 per cent of GDP, already by far the highest in Europe, to 5.3 per cent; the European average has gone from 3.5 per cent to 3.8 per cent. Britain alone (apart from Luxembourg) has matched NATO's target of a 3 per cent increase p.a. in real terms — indeed we have exceeded it. The idea of any further increases under Labour, or indeed a failure to reduce this level, is simply appalling.

Leaving aside the fact that Britain is now, with Reagan's US, leading a new world military expansion with dire consequences worldwide — can Britain afford it? Hasn't Peter Kellner seen the evidence that Britain has become one of the poorest countries in Europe by 40 years of military over-spending? Isn't this a vicious spiral we should stop?

Labour and home ownership

Michael Meadowcroft MP, House of Commons

The substance of David Griffiths' letter (*NS* 13 July) on the justice of restricting mortgage interest relief is accurate and politically acceptable, but he is quite wrong to suggest that 'only a year ago Labour was opposing the increase in the ceiling from £25,000 to £30,000.'

The Division in question was on 30 June 1983 when the Liberals forced a vote. Labour officials abstained and the Liberals were joined in the lobby by eight of the Labour left and the four nationalists.

Why should the chair of the Labour Housing Group seek to pretend that Labour is more radical than its record shows?

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Racism and immigration controls

Ian Martin, London E1

One aside in John Rentoul and Geraldine Hackett's article on black sections (*NS* 13 July) ought not to be allowed to go unchallenged. Militant, they say, 'claims to be more interested in changing what it sees as the Labour Party's racist policies (the programme is still committed to immigration controls, for instance) than in constitutional changes . . .'

Whether this is a fair reflection of the position of Militant supporters is for them to say. But I dispute a reference to Labour's policy on immigration which implies that it is essentially unchanged and that acceptance of any form of immigration control is racist.

Successive statements by the National Executive Committee, first on nationality and then on immigration, adopted by Conference in 1981 and 1982, repudiated the past record of Labour governments, committed itself to the repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 British Nationality Act, and spelt out in practical detail the specific changes which would create a non-racist system of immigration control.

We are thus committed to restoring the principle that any child born in Britain is a British citizen, irrespective of the parents' status. We will restore the absolute entitlement to registration as a British citizen taken away from Commonwealth citizens settled here before 1973, and extend it to spouses of all British citizens. We will extend full British citizenship to the East African Asians, whom a Labour government treated so shamefully in 1968. We will require respect for family life in immigration law, liberalising criteria for children, elderly parents and other relatives, while requiring all applications to be processed promptly under simplified procedures. We will end the discrimination on grounds of sex and race in the present rules so that all women settled here, irrespective of citizenship, have the right to live here with their husbands.

Socialists aspire to live in a world of international economic equality and free movement between countries. But we have not confused this ultimate goal with a pretence that it could be brought nearer by a unilateral abandonment of any immigration control. Such a pledge would be neither right nor credible, nor does it have the support of the black community.

Miners' strike in S. Wales

Penny Smith, Welsh Campaign for Civil and Political Liberties, Cardiff

The South Wales NUM and the Welsh Campaign for Civil and Political Liberties (WCCPL) are embarking on a joint research project to document the miners' strike here in South Wales. The project will involve the interviewing of miners and the women in the mining communities, the issuing of a detailed questionnaire, as well as the detailed documentation of the implementation of criminal and welfare legislation. The work involved is considerable and costly.

Unfortunately, the South Wales NUM has no money to cover the cost, every penny of its limited funds being used to finance the strike and the feeding of strikers and their families. The WCCPL is a wholly voluntary organisation, relying in large part on the goodwill (and deep pockets) of its members for its continued and much-needed work. Consequently, we are appealing to your readers for funds to finance the project, all sizes of donations being gratefully received. A proportion of the money received will be used to finance the publication of the results in book form, due at the end of September/beginning of October. Any money left over will be handed over to the South Wales NUM's Strike Fund. Cheques and postal orders, made payable, please, to the Pit Families Research Appeal Fund, should be sent to Phil Thomas and Penny Smith, c/o 13, Dogo St., Cardiff CF1 9JJ, as soon as possible.

Nothing to do with me

Wilf Kristian Whitaker, Liberal/SDP Alliance Candidate, Selby, Yorks.

Your article 'Ratepayers revolt' (*NS* 20 July) contained many parallels with much smaller issues than Greenham. Your correspondent is obviously 'frightened . . . by the undoubtedly genuine ability of people to totally compartmentalise their lives'. Sadly this is very common — and is increasing.

Generally, I think it is the distrust and lack of faith in the political process which is behind it. Obviously the whole question of Greenham Common — the nuclear missiles, the armed guards, the destruction of the area by the encampment, the presence of demonstrators, pickets and media people *is* political. RAGE members and others would probably acknowledge it, but they would be fearful of being seen to be 'involved'. I reckon many of them rather feel that to make their point politically would be to get involved in the same 'political game' that the protestors are in — and it is the very existence of that 'game' which they find disquieting; they don't want to be 'involved', but by being where they are, they have become involved — and they probably resent the peacewomen more for getting them involved than for their actual views.

The only way in which this problem can ultimately be overcome is by rebuilding faith in our democracy, but that's a tall order! Until that happens I'm afraid that we will see more groups like RAGE — generally right-of-centre politically, but without commitment to any particular party — just groups of people pleading that they 'don't want to be involved' and would everybody please take their disturbing and critical arguments somewhere else!

Increasingly silly

John Lucas, Beeston, Notts.

I didn't, as Alistair Elliot maintains (Letters 13 July), treat Anthony Thwaite's poem as comparable with Larkin's 'Mr Bleaney' (*NS* 22 June). I said that comparison had been made and then went on to point out the differences. Lines which I call bad Elliot calls 'low-key throwaway', which I'd say comes to the same thing.

In his refusal to accept the reasonableness of my remark that 'the Second World War was in a sense America's first', Elliot is becoming increasingly silly. Of course, I know that American writers had things to say about the first war, that isn't at issue. But America's involvement in the Great War was strictly limited in duration (just over a year), in combat troops (just over a million), and in combat area (Europe). In great contrast, after the bombing of American territory (Pearl Harbour), America committed millions of troops to the Second World War and they fought for four years all over the world. If Elliot still can't see that my remark therefore makes perfectly good sense I don't think I can help him any further.

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Alison Hennegan

Too sensual . . . too pious . . .

Mary Evans Picture Library

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was not only abbess but also essayist, playwright, linguist, scientist, composer, herbalist and artist

Medieval Women Writers
ed. KATHARINA M. WILSON *Manchester*
£27.50 & £9.50
Women Writers of the Middle Ages
PETER DRONKE *Cambridge* £27.50 & £10.95

Through women were all great men destroyed — Adam, Samson, Solomon, David, Job (and even Abelard, added the unnecessarily self-accusing Heloïse who had of all women least cause to blame herself for her supremely difficult husband's calamities). Yet through women might humanity be saved, whether by intercession of the Virgin, the divine knowledge vouchsafed its mystics or the revelations of its prophets. Caught between — and sometimes capitalising on — their conflicting destinies as bringers of Death and givers of Life, mediaeval women picked their cautious way.

Fifteen of them are presented to us in **Medieval Women Writers**. The comparatively unknown — such as Florencia Pinar, the Spanish love poet; Marguerite Porete, the French Béguine; Castelloza, the Provençal poet — join the thoroughly familiar figures of Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Heloïse. All from Latin Europe, they span seven centuries — the 9th to 15th — and nine languages: Latin, French, Provençal, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Dutch, Middle English and Low German. Many were members of an aristocratic minority but of that minority they may well be typical in their often formidable learning. Well versed in both Christian and pagan authors, many of them wrote comfortably in Latin, some outstandingly. Others, living later, socially less elevated and knowing only their vernaculars, were dependent on amanuenses to whom they dictated. Each is introduced in this book by a different scholar who also provides new translations of the selected passages.

Each woman in her own way negotiated the dangerously open ground between public acclaim and censure. Some — Hrosvitha of Gandersheim, Hildegard of Bingen — did so with resounding success. Others — the irrepressible Margery Kempe was only just not burned for Lollardy by the Archbishop of York — managed by the skin of their teeth. And one — the Béguine, Marguerite Porete, who defied her inquisitors for 18 months and *was* burned, for heresy, in Paris on 1 June 1310 — managed not at all.

Hers is the starkest fate. Even Dhuoda, the 9th-century Frankish noblewoman whose husband and elder son were both beheaded by Charles the Bald and whose younger son was forcibly removed from her before his baptism and probably never saw her again, knew sufferings of a lesser order. Yet both Marguerite and Dhuoda may, with the other 13 women revealed here, be deemed triumphant. All of them have defeated the enemies of time, fortune, editorial vagaries, inaccurate ascriptions, theological shifts and literary fashions. Their works, which earned some of them international reputations in their own life times, were often lost for centuries and rediscovered by chance when their authorship was then hotly contested. Hildegard, the 12th-century visionary, scientist, composer, herbalist and artist, wrote three volumes of visions, a play, medical and scientific treatises *and* invented her own language. In 1874 the German scholar Wilhelm Preger declared that of all the works bearing her name the only one that could be confidently attributed to her was part of a letter to Bernard of Clairvaux. And poor Heloïse has not been allowed undisputed claim to her own letters for several centuries now. 'Too sensual for an abbess', say the clerical scholars. 'Too pious and intellectual for a wanton', say the men of the world.

The history of these women's reviving reputations is almost as fascinating as their lives (where reliable details exist, which is rare) and as illuminating as their works (too many of them still virtually inaccessible to the general reader and many still unedited). Luckily we have Margery's *Book*, the first English autobiography, discovered in a private Lancashire library in 1934. And Hadewijch, the Brabant mystic whose 13th-century prose is the earliest extant in Dutch, has been translated into English since this book was completed. Christine de Pizan, Europe's first professional woman of letters, was restored (for the first time since 1521) to her English readership last year when her *Book of the City of Ladies* became, via Picador's resourcefulness, an autumn best-seller. But oh for an English translation of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples âmes* in which Holy Church the Little (the corrupt 14th-century establishment, suitably excoriated for its laxity and reliance on Reason) is contrasted with Holy Church the Great, the vast assembly of 'free souls', past and present, governed solely by Divine Love and, heretically, needing no priestly or sacramental intercession.

Just the dangerous sort of stuff you'd expect from one of those Béguines whose self-supporting secular but devout communities, beginning to flourish in the 13th century, attracted single and widowed women of all classes. Alternately praised for their Faith and Works and reviled for their intellectual and spiritual independence (closely linked to their economic autonomy), Béguines were always suspect and subject to the Church's persecution.

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Yet female heretics and female saints, both of which proliferated wildly during the later middle ages, were all part of that great upsurge of faith, and mysticism in particular, which characterised the 12th and 13th centuries and in which women played such a remarkable role. Ten of these 15 women writers lived lives constantly informed by faith and religion. Some were mystics and visionaries: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch and Julian of Norwich. Some combined their visions with ceaseless and influential interventions in secular and papal politics: St Bridget of Sweden and St Catherine of Siena. Others were able conventual administrators: Hildegard, and Heloïse who was a theologian and philosopher acknowledged by Abelard to be his intellectual equal. Hrosvitha, the 10th-century dramatist, was a canoness of the Abbey of Gandersheim. And Margery Kempe, though in her fits and trances troublesome to herself, her husband, her King's Lynn neighbours, Archbishops, Saracens and fellow pilgrims, was indubitably utterly devout.

None of them suffered Marguerite's fate. Yet many of them might have done. Luck — where you lived, under which archbishop's jurisdiction, in what decade — often had more power to confer orthodoxy than did the canonical purity of your words. Luck — and prudence. Hildegard took the precaution of getting her visionary powers attested — by Frederick Barbarossa *and* Bernard of Clairvaux — before she circulated the visions themselves. St Bridget handed her Revelations over to her confessors for pre-publication scrutiny. Hrosvitha surrounded her writings with so many layers of deprecatory irony that even her editors have trouble deciding what's appropriate womanly humility and what's tongue-in-cheek mockery of male mentors. By drawing on the middle ages' belief in the peculiarly female powers of prophecy and vision, some of the women who denounced ecclesiastical corruption most harshly could do so safely as the passive and obedient medium of the divine message — an art which Catherine of Siena made pungently her own in her blistering letters to Popes, Antipopes and Cardinals. Julian, expounding more fully, impassionedly and complexly than any writer before her the once familiar, now almost forgotten conception of 'God The Mother', took care to explain as unalarmingly as possible every stage in the development of her potentially dangerous thought.

SCRUPULOUS and scholarly though it is, *Medieval Women Writers* is basically an introduction, a collection of necessarily small-scale studies which pave the way for a larger, more ambitious, subtle and demanding treatment of the kind splendidly exemplified by Peter Dronke's **Women Writers of the Middle Ages**. Peter Dronke (who contributes to *Medieval Women Writers* a typically meticulous and sensitive study of Castelloza) has done a good deal to encourage the rediscovery and re-evaluation of mediaeval women authors. His essay on Hildegard in his 1970 *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages* stimulated fresh interest in her. In *Abelard and Heloïse in Medieval Testimonies* he passionately championed Heloïse as the author of her own epistles and as Abelard's peer in intellect, his superior in integrity. His work on mediaeval lyric has always been attentive to works by, and possibly by, women.

His new book is characterised by his astonishing depth and breadth of scholarship and by his fine, subtle (but never merely ingenious) textual criticism. He demonstrates an unembarrassed love for his subject, a partisan but not uncritical enthusiasm for his authors and an unabashed acknowledgement of his own moral, literary and human values. His own exhilaration exhilarates. Unfailingly courteous to erring scholars, ruthless to errant scholarship, he has a width of reading and recall in classical, Biblical and patristic literature which seems to catch every echo and allusion in the endlessly allusive texts he describes, quotes and analyses.

Five of the women included in *Medieval Women Writers* — Dhuoda, Hrosvitha, Hildegard, Heloïse and Marguerite Porete — also appear here, together with chapters on Perpetua, the 3rd-century martyr, and lesser known poets of the 11th and 12th centuries. Complexities indicated but unexamined in *Medieval Women Writers* are explored. The full, astounding range of Hildegard's intellect and learning is revealed. Hrosvitha emerges as a consciously subversive talent, brilliantly manipulating irony and allusion for the enjoyment of herself and her learned auditors who ('unlike her editors') will recognise and appreciate her skill. Heloïse agonisingly and ceaselessly searches for a spiritual and intellectual integrity in her conventual present which will not deny or obliterate the sexual and emotional integrity of her past. It was, says Dronke in his preface, the 'many-sidedness' of these authors which he wished to capture and convey. He succeeds magnificently. □

Gareth Reeves

English lesson

He is our fond teacher.
'This is where it happened, this
is the place.' Stopping where
Perdita gives flowers to Florizel

he stands, legs slightly apart,
and remembers how they took him
one noon from the P.O.W. reading club
mid-speech . . . Before the war he was engaged;

after it, he soaked in the bath for hours
slicing dead skin from his soles,
it is rumoured: shoes wore out
fast on the Burma railway.

When a shovel disappeared
someone stepped forward to own up
and was shot then and there;
then the shovel turned up. . .

Stories for schoolboys —
his high-voiced and bitter
charity made real, I see now,
in the listening, childish faces.

MEDICINE
Anne Karpf

Talking shop

Doctors
JONATHAN GATHORNE-HARDY *Weidenfeld*
£10.95

Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy has been burrowing his way through British institutions. He started with the nanny, moved on logically to the public school and his last book was about marriage and divorce. Now he has turned to general practitioners and produced, among a thicket of truisms, a valuable crop of insights.

There is much that is unoriginal in this book. Gathorne-Hardy takes us on a Grand Tour of general practice and, like all Grand Tours, the result is a fleeting brush with the sights, rather than a real engagement. All the issues are there: the influence of the drug companies, merits and demerits of group practice and health centres, doctor-patient communication, inner-city problems, etc. But they've received a good going-over elsewhere and, though Gathorne-Hardy draws heavily (over-heavily) on research by sociologists Ann Cartwright and Hessie Sachs, his treatment of so many issues inevitably becomes cursory.

His main claim to originality is his form. The book comprises direct quotation (in solid chunks) from 50 GPs around the country (thematic chapters interspersed with chapters devoted to one or two GPs). Yet where the GPs are merely sounding off on topics prominent on the medical agenda, the result is aerated rhetoric rather than substance. Gathorne-Hardy's own commentary, stitching together the interviews, is also flawed. He emerges as a personable and chatty fellow with a pragmatic approach to medicine. Stylistically, he leans towards the demotic, with his 'crap' and 'claptrap'. Some of his judgments are sweeping and unsustainable — 'the older people are the less they are affected by death'.

And his thumb-nail sketches of his GPs sound curiously redolent — but of what? 'Dr Warfield was 50, with a strong, sensitive face, his cleft chin tucked in under his lower lip, cheerful, extrovert, brisk' or 'He had large, pale eyes, dark jowls, a pasty face and was rather irritable. He treated his 20-year-old son as if he were 14, though he was clearly very fond of him.' Ah yes, change the verbs into the present tense, and you have the dramatist's opening description of characters. At times like this, Gathorne-Hardy's GPs sound as if he had invented them.

Yet there's one feature of the book which is consistently compelling. He really engages with his GPs as people, and is clearly fascinated by the subtext of their discourse. Like a therapist manqué — but never irksomely so, save occasionally when proudly parading an insight — he worries away at the undercoat, not deflected by the sheen of their declaiming. Unable to take such an independent line on

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medical issues, he does it marvellously well on human relations. He understands beautifully that GPs are human beings constricted by their social role (though he doesn't note that they have helped construct it) and frequently lack an overflow pipe for negative feelings. He repeatedly makes the connection between the way they function as GPs in coping with their patients' emotions and the way they handle their own.

His antennae are sensitive, so that, although the GP who gave it all up to become a civil servant presents his decision as sudden, Gathorne-Hardy detects a longer gestation. And of another GP's home visit, he observes, 'It also seemed to me that the symptoms were anxiety ones and that David made no attempt to find out if that were so'.

He's intrigued by how GPs deal with stress, often scared of their anger, cutting off, until it rises up to overwhelm them. He proposes a regular, organised system of counselling or confidential therapy which all GPs should undergo every four months or so, though he's mindful of the potential resistance.

Gathorne-Hardy's nose for GPs' emotional habits makes it impossible to situate this book in either the doctor-bashing camp or the doctor-stroking one, though he admits in his introduction that his sample, garnered largely by word of mouth and medical recommendation, tends to be largely the acknowledged 'good doctors'. Certainly, he does much to puncture the stereotype of the GP, by visiting surgeries disparate in geography (from the Highlands to the West Country), in finance (from gleaming health centres to a slum practice where the prams of ante-natal clinic mothers are padlocked to avoid vandalism), in ideology (from the feminist to the virulently sexist — the dean of a medical school — and racist). Not all his GPs are dedicated and under pressure: some are carefree golfers who dabble in medicine, many are pedestrian in outlook and noticeably lacking in glowing vocational idealism. □

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Paul Binding

A daring life

One Writer's Beginnings
EUDORA WELTY *Harvard* £8

13 April this year was declared by the Governor of Mississippi to be Eudora Welty Day: it was the 75th birthday of a writer for whom 'genius' is, for once, a not inappropriate word. From the early stories of *A Curtain of Green* onwards, Eudora Welty has given her readers new eyes and ears, more attentive to intimate detail and yet able to see and hear the spiritual forces in the tangible, fleshly world.

A three-day conference was held in the state capital Jackson to celebrate the birthday. Speaking at it, I was struck by a paradox about her, surely unparalleled among living writers: rooted in her own society she not only expresses an empathy for it but holds a continuing dialogue with it; and yet her intentness on men's and women's existential apprehensions of themselves and their world, and her ability to embody these in an art of extraordinary precision, have given her fiction a rare universality, attested to by French, British and Japanese critics.

'I am a writer who came of a sheltered life,' Eudora Welty says of herself. 'A sheltered life can be a daring life too. For all serious daring starts within.'

These are the closing words of Eudora Welty's latest book, her memoirs, the considerable success of which has been another significant feature of 1984 for its author. One of the most interesting lectures at the April conference dealt with the history of the reception of Welty's work by the American (particularly the New York) establishment. In the early years often snootily dismissive, it was all too eager to brand her as yet another Southern woman writer with a caravanserai of freaks, 'niggers' and sensitive young girls. It is therefore impossible not to view the acclaim for *One Writer's Beginnings* with a certain irony. A writer of great fiction has been most feted for a work of non-fiction, one which is moreover especially fascinating in the light it casts on individual imaginative writings which were all but passed over at the time.

One Writer's Beginnings is, in fact, more conventional in manner and matter than Eudora Welty's other writings and the reader will not find here quite that mystical, straining element which distinguishes the finest of them (the short story 'A Still Moment', the volume of interconnected stories *The Gold Apples*). And the reader will search in vain for a real elucidation of Eudora's art.

This said, however, *One Writer's Beginnings* is still a book of great sensitivity — as controlled and yet aspiring as a lyric poem. It is in three parts. The first, 'Listening', shows the child emerging from a cultivated and loving home into the larger world of Jackson and learning about the mores and confusions of that world by attending to conversations, half-finished monologues, the whole babble of interchange at school and in the streets. The second, 'Learning to See', depicts the author's developing powers of observation through emotion-charged evocations of holidays with her grandparents — her mother came from a large, lively community in the mountains of West Virginia, her father was the only child of Puritan Ohio farmers of Swiss descent. Eudora Welty, charitable even in childhood, seems to have appreciated both, but it was perhaps the mountain country which produced the kind of awareness she would later bring to her most distinctive fiction:

> It took the mountain top, it seems to me now, to give me the sensation of independence. It was as if I'd discovered something I'd never tasted before in my short life. Or rediscovered it — for I associated it with the water that came out of the well, accompanied with the ring of that long metal sleeve against the sides of the living mountain, as from deep down it was wound up to view brimming and streaming long drops behind it like bright stars on a ribbon. It thrilled me to drink from the common dipper. The coldness, the far, unseen, unheard springs of what was in my mouth now, the iron strength of its flavour that drew my cheeks in, its fern-laced smell, all said mountain, mountain, mountain as I swallowed. Every swallow was making me a part of being here, sealing me in place, with my bare feet on the mountain and sprinkled with my rapturous spills. What I felt I'd come here to do was something on my own.

To an important extent this last sentence applies to creative writing. The last section of the book, 'Finding a Voice', tells — a little diffidently — of Eudora Welty's finding out what she felt that she, and no one else, could do in fiction. At first, in writings never published, she had attended too much to other writers. Then, when she left college, she took a job with the Works Progress Administration as junior publicity agent. This meant she had to travel all over her native state, then in the worst grip of the Depression. She took with her a camera and began to capture her fellow Mississippians — at work and in their more secret activities, together and solitary, unawares and merrily or aggressively defiant of the Brownie and its holder. From these journeys and photographs (now given to the Mississippi State Archives) Eudora Welty the creative writer emerged; she gives us here the genesis of her very first story, 'Death of a Travelling Salesman'.

In her childhood Eudora Welty read that moral classic *Sandford and Merton* by Thomas Day reduced to words of one syllable. 'If we would be great,' went one sentence in it, 'we must first learn to be good.' It seems to me that Eudora Welty, not least in this autobiography, is a vindication of this now unfashionable maxim. □

A Taste of China
JAMES BALLINGALL

Many parts of the country which have long remained a mystery to the Western World were included in James Ballingall's journey. He combines his interest in the struggles facing China and her efforts to emerge as a modern State, with observations on the everyday life of the people.
Illustrated £9.95

The Token
SUSANNA MITCHELL

'A narrative notable for convincing characterisations, potent imagery, and absence of soft-centred sentiment...neither morbid nor sensational; simply serious.' The Times
'Susanna Mitchell's first novel... is unusually honest, about both the successes and failings of human relationships.' Times Literary Supplement **£8.50**

JOHN MURRAY

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BIOGRAPHY
Zareer Masani

Once king

Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography: Vol. 3 1956-64
SARVEPALLI GOPAL *Cape* £18

It's a pity that the most eminent historians seem to lose their judgment the closer they are to events. Dr Gopal is certainly an eminent historian — possibly the best India has — but his reputation will not be enhanced by this Nehru trilogy. With exclusive access to private papers and government archives, and three hefty volumes to spread himself over, Gopal might have produced a biographical monument to rival Deutscher's *Trotsky*. The first volume, on the pre-independence years, was promising; but he fails to bring the same historical or biographical insight to Nehru's years in power.

It's not so much a question of the author's proclaimed partiality to his subject. Anyone who lived through the Nehru era and compares it with the squalid regime of his daughter, Indira Gandhi, is entitled to some nostalgia. Gopal's major fault is not that he glamorises Nehru, but that he makes him boring. There is no trace in these pages of the man whose personality even his harshest critics found irresistible — of the social charm, the impish sense of humour and the intellectual calibre which made him unique among Indian politicians. Gopal's Nehru is a sombre and self-righteous creature, constantly sermonising with pious platitudes. This is because he is seen almost entirely through his own verbose political writings and speeches, quoted and paraphrased *ad nauseam*. Nehru, by the author's own admission, was not an original or innovative thinker. Yet, reading Gopal, one might imagine that Nehru alone had anything worth saying about himself or the rest of the world. There is hardly a comment or an anecdote from any other source, though many of Nehru's colleagues and opponents are still alive and could have added some flesh to the bones.

The result is a lifeless, one-dimensional and dreary portrayal of one of the more fascinating individuals of our time. Gopal may be right in saying that 'the magnetism of Nehru cannot be conveyed on the printed page', but couldn't he at least have tried? There is no sense at all of the drama and excitement, the cut and thrust of political debate, which Nehru so enjoyed and dominated in his time.

For the same reasons that it fails as biography, the book also fails as history. Nehru's most pious protestations about democracy, socialism and world peace are taken at face value, and there is little analysis of political and economic developments in more structural terms. Where there are obvious contradictions, Gopal looks for personalised explanations. For instance, Nehru's tolerance of political corruption is attributed to his personal loyalty to close colleagues and his distaste for the Indian habit of scandal-mongering. Might one not also have considered whether Nehru the politician was enough of a realist to recognise corruption as an indispensable part of the nexus between Congress bosses, who controlled the vote-banks, and blackmarketeering businessmen who prospered under Congress 'socialism'?

By ignoring Nehru's more hard-headed political nature, Gopal not only neglects an important facet of his personality, but obscures a large measure of political continuity between Nehru's regime and his daughter's. For all the difference between the two, in intellectual calibre and moral stature, Mrs Gandhi can rightly claim that no political crime of which she stands accused lacks a precedent in her father's time. Her suppression of regional

Camera Press
Nehru: essentially pragmatic and transitional?

minorities like the Sikhs in Punjab and the Muslims of Kashmir is closely mirrored by Nehru's genocidal war against the Naga hill-tribes and his imprisonment of the Kashmiri leader, Sheikh Abdullah. Her contempt for civil liberties and preference for emergency powers can claim precedents in Nehru's use of preventive detention against the Communists. Her habit of 'toppling' non-Congress state governments by central intervention was first acquired under Nehru, when she persuaded him to oust the democratically elected Communist government of Kerala. Her protection of business and landed élites marks no major change in Nehru's brand of 'mixed economy'. And her blatant dynasticism harks back to the more subtle 'grooming' of herself by her father.

To say all this is not to visit the sins of the daughter on the father. There *was* an important difference in that Nehru did such things reluctantly, while Mrs Gandhi revels in them. But the comparison is relevant in assessing Nehru's role as the founder of India's present political system, warts and all. It is therefore surprising that Gopal's book contains only two passing references to Mrs Gandhi, even though she lived with her father, travelled everywhere with him and became, with his approval, President of the Congress Party. Whether or not Gopal accepts the view that she was his *eminence grise* or that he prepared the succession for her, surely it was a political partnership worth investigating? Or was silence on this subject the price of 'unfettered' access to the family archives?

A major theme of this volume is Nehru's handling of the border dispute with China. But Gopal does little more than regurgitate the official Indian view of the Chinese as the aggressors. Despite access to new material, he offers no new arguments against the rival case (argued by Neville Maxwell in *India's China War*) that there was no recognised border and that Nehru allowed himself to be stampeded into a disastrous war by jingoistic public opinion.

Underlying Gopal's romantic notion of 'India's once and — we may hope — future king' is the assumption that Nehru had grasped India's essential needs and come up with the right solutions. But future historians, considering the evidence Gopal ignores, may well conclude that Nehru's real greatness lay in his role as a pragmatic, transitional leader, mediating the transfer of power from an aristocratic, ex-colonial ruling class (to which he belonged) to more populist, aggressive and narrow-minded élites. □

FICTION
Grace Ingoldby

Short and sour

Filthy English
JONATHAN MEADES *Cape* £7.95
Dividing Lines
VICTOR SAGE *Chatto* £8.95 & £3.95
The Crystal Fountain and other stories
MALACHI WHITAKER *Carcanet* £6.95

Jonathan Meades appears on the back cover of his first collection looking joyously sated and decadent, wearing shades and a narrow tie and the air of 'happy brutality' attributed to one of his own characters. As the title suggests, the stories are relentlessly obscene and fairly funny, an exorcism of gentility perhaps as the author, now fancy-free features editor of *Tatler*, comes from Salisbury, Wilts., a Sloanish place of sensible shoes and navy stockings whose inhabitants apparently push nothing more lethal than the occasional basket on wheels.

His opening bout, 'Fur and Skin' is told in Glenda Slag tones by a dirty, fallen and fatally addicted dog: 'Aniseed is inseparably linked in my mind to the bodies of fallen women.' Star of 'The Alsatian and Lorraine' and 'Chien de Pompier' which he rather enjoyed making, this is a tale with a blinding sting as the dog's life ends as the wrong part of the trinity he once so admired — black glasses, white stick, dog in harness. Set further afield and farther astray is 'Oh so Bent', a story of old Morocco of the 'clitoris pink clouds' where Danny and Holland Hughes are taking jolly homosexual hols. On the lines here of Joe Orton's biography 'Prick up your Ears' (a Meadish title this), it ends in more than tears and opens with Holland following the grossly strutting Danny through a maze of dark and desperate streets: 'Holland was transfixed by the lubric swagger of the

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bastard's hips, by his promiscuously displayed smile, by his huge smooth hands: "He used to say were like a bunch of Fyffes".' The pick of a smutty bunch, being stronger on chill than thrill, is 'Filthy English' in which Ian Spode, a lexicographer presently working on the word 'foot', steps out on a meandering and menacing path towards 49 Colony Road, Southampton, where he finds out something to his advantage. The domestic scene, mother lying in bed all day entering competitions, Ian downstairs struggling with the linguistically obscure, jogs the memory, as does much of this collection, of other stories, other places: Kafka, McEwan and in this instance O'Toole's anally fixated Ignatious in *Confederacy of Dunces*. Meades writes well within his capabilities and has a circus-like versatility with language which, though it palls as one dare-devil leap succeeds another, leaves little doubt that he has plenty more up his sleeve, if not down his trousers, all of which should go down like a lead balloon in the Cathedral Close.

Whatever the short story is, isn't or should be, Victor Sage gives the impression in his first collection that he isn't happy in it and is desperate to get out. The stories begin unremarkably enough: in 'Obscurity' a wizened, overlooked librarian, actually the cretinous dwarf who stopped Freud from bleeding to death, is reduced to a footnote in history; in 'Destroying Angel' Gillian's lover foolishly provides her truculent daughter with a book on mushrooms. . . But all the time Sage's imagination, like a powerful bird, is flapping to take off, the stories are adept but impaired by a superfluity of examples and increase in length as the collection progresses to reach a climax in 'Crusoe' which isn't a short story in any sense but rather a frightening and, at times, quite superb flight of the imagination where Sage at last seems to find relief. 'That's what I do, walk back up the beach into the trees, nothing on my mind except my curriculum', it begins, seemingly straightforward enough. But this curriculum is motivated by obsessive paranoic dread of imminent invasion — 'there, a corner I've neglected' — and leads Crusoe ever on to heights and depths of the maddened and the absurd: the plan which shows him how to enter his own inner pound, the constant harassment of Hodges's horribly mobile, rat-infested corpse — Hodges must have a house, Hodges must have livestock, Hodges must have land. The pseudo parrot who terrorises its captor with its repertoire, 'He started to produce twelve-tone chamber pieces that made me quite ill. . . he became obsessed by dissonance'. The electricity supply to ensure a civilised life in the section appropriately called 'Power from the Bottom', the desperate thread of uncreative thinking which tells of the luckless Arthur and Pearl — anything to empty out the mind. Sage flies here quite happily in arcs and dives, humorous and at home, an uneven book but worth reading for 'Crusoe' alone.

Many of Malachi Whitaker's stories first appeared in *The Adelphi* magazine — 'There was a man called D.H. Lawrence, he was the best contributor of all' — and are peopled by characters all in some way mentally or physically remote, men and women of strong feelings but few words, caught neatly, economically and authoritatively in moments of minor triumph, small tragedy or stark epiphany. Whether in London or Yorkshire — 'The farm of Harry Inn Corner stood high and alone on a moorland shoulder. It faced west' — one senses that their strongest element is their ability to forbear. A woman with a bastard child is reawakened from a state of oblivious stasis on a bus ride which passes the Mile End Road market: 'The clouds had won against the sun but the fruit stalls cut the gloom. . . the fruit made her think of other countries, other worlds . . . there was a world forming where there had been darkness for so long.' Men, women and children have a lingering sadness and a timidity that stills action: a cowed mother lets her daughter's lover freeze; a music box, secretly saved for, is obediently taken back. No big waves here but rather a gentle, haunting and often humorous voice well worth re-printing. □

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Charles Fox

A way with words

Why No Beethoven?
HUMPHREY LYTTELTON *Robson Books* £7.50
The Lyttelton Hart-Davis Letters, Vol. 6 (1961-62)
John Murray £13.50

A way with words occasionally gets passed, whether by genes or a fortuitous upbringing, from parents to children. The two Amises spring to mind; so does the triangle of H.G. Wells and Rebecca and Anthony West. George Lyttelton was never a professional writer but a house-master at Eton; his son Humphrey is best known for playing the trumpet and as a highly relaxed broadcaster. Yet both are as readable as they are exacting in their use of language.

Humphrey relates how his father loathed jazz yet doted on the personnels of swing bands listed in *Hot Discography*, particularly relishing Sam Donahue's Navy Band of 1945 (Tak Takvorian, Joe Aglora and Buz Sithens were just three of the sidemen). Writing to Rupert Hart-Davis, George extols Llansantffraed-in-Elfael as 'a poem in itself'. And he points out the adjectives that writers were fondest of using: Winston Churchill's was 'sombre', Pater's 'wistful' and 'dainty'. (Lyttelton's own favourite in this volume seems to be 'repellent', applied both to Cardinal Newman and D.H. Lawrence's beard).

The only other overlapping between these books occurs when George, an assiduous if sceptical GCE examiner, deals in 1961 with papers about Macaulay sent from the Lebanon ('Several of them said that Charles II's army was lacking in "cavalcades"'). For towards the end of *Why No Beethoven?* Humphrey describes a visit to Beirut. The 'troubles' were already on the go, yet the chief complaints are about the 'sound mixers' ('Fucking Marconis' was the band's phrase for them) at the concert, while much gourmandising went on at a restaurant owned by Albert Rizk, who combined the torso of Orson Welles with the face of 'an amiable toad'. In a postscript full of worried hindsight, Lyttelton speculates upon what may have happened to Rizk and others whom the band ran into in Beirut and elsewhere.

For his book is based on a diary kept during a series of tours organised by the British Council: to Warsaw in 1976, then to the Middle East in 1979 and 1982. Dicey situations recur; there are details of food consumed or rejected (the low spot was mince with boiled rice at Petra) and of bizarreries observed (a Damascan taxi-cab contained silver-framed photos of the driver's entire family). But it is the band, rather than Lyttelton himself, around which the narrative hovers. Only outsiders will think the portraits exaggerated, with Johnny Barnes always eager to imitate Richard Tauber and the vegetarian communist Bruce Turner talking in phrases pillaged from the *Magnet* ('Some fun I'd say' and 'This is the life for a chap!').

Vividness prevails, not only in this diary but in the correspondence between George Lyttelton and Rupert Hart-Davis, begun in 1955, of which this is, alas, the final volume (Lyttelton died of cancer of the liver in May 1962, aged 79). Detractors may grumble about the literary ambience (Mary Cholmondley's *Little Pottage* is perhaps the most obscure of the books mentioned), even the observations about class ('No domestic will ever touch game, however perfect', writes George). Yet these are part of the letters' value, a reflection of some prevailing tastes and social niceties.

There are shrewd comments about Dickens ('Pecksniff should have been left a figure of fun, not become a plotter and villain'), admirable sniping at Lawrence, Jane Austen, Leavis and Housman. Yet, while lambasting the last-named ('a very ungenial spirit'), Lyttelton, always a keen savourer of invective, quotes Housman's attack on an 18th-century editor of Manilius: 'Stoeber's mind, though that is no name to call it by, was one which turned as unswervingly to the false, the meaningless, the unmetrical, and the ungrammatical, as the needle to the pole.'

Above all there is gossip, the most enduring of genres. Malcolm Sargent ('Flash Harry, the debutante's dread') tells near-dirty stories to Princess Marina. Diana Cooper avoids parking fines by leaving a note on her windscreen: HAVE MERCY. AM TAKING SAD CHILD TO THE CINEMA. Dinners at the Literary Society chronicle how Bruce Lockhart and other contemporaries become increasingly gaga. But the mood is stoical, even zestful, with Lyttelton's prose keeping its clarity until the very end. □

Among this week's contributors:

ALISON HENNEGAN used to be Literary Editor of *Gay News* and now works for the Women's Press.

PAUL BINDING's novel *Harmonica's Bridegroom* was published by Aidan Ellis earlier this year.

GRACE INGOLDBY's first novel is to be published by Michael Joseph in spring 1985.

PETER DORMER has worked for *Crafts* magazine as its reviews editor.

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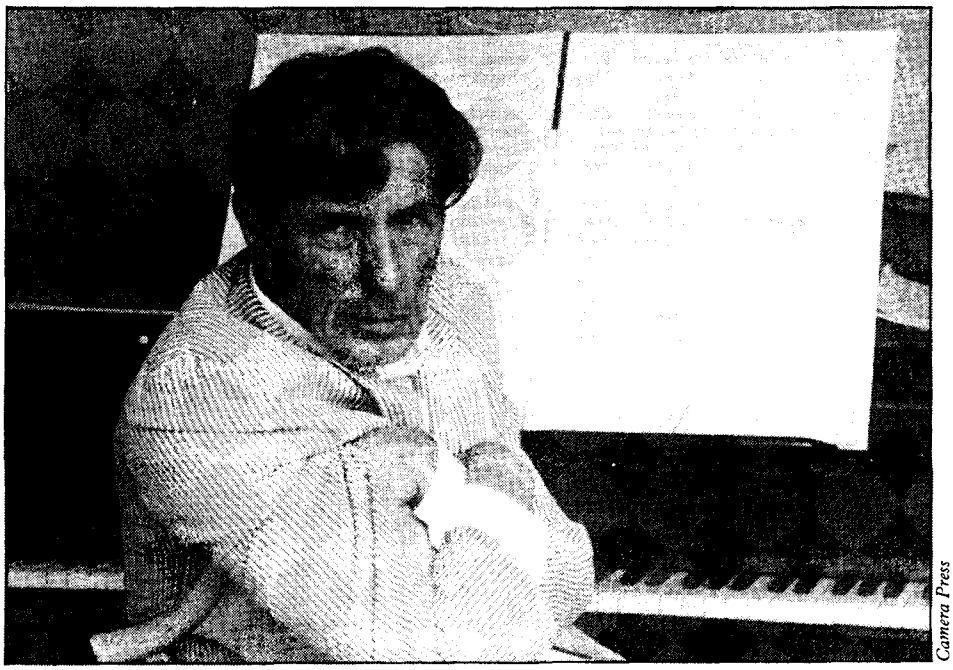
MUSIC
Andrew Clements

Illuminations

Tippett: The Mask of Time
Albert Hall/Radio 3



Camera Press

Tippett has summed up his work so far in 'The Mask of Time'

Michael Tippett's development has hitherto been signalled in his major operatic works. Stylistic changes have followed the dramatic exigencies of their subject matter: lyrical efflorescence for the world of *The Midsummer Marriage*, harder-edged, transition-less blocks for *King Priam*, networks of allusion and reference for *The Knot Garden*. In the wake of each of these operas have followed groups of works sharing the same linguistic preoccupations, satellites to the central creative endeavour. With *The Mask of Time* however, an undertaking at least as substantial as any of the operas and more ambitious in its scope, the sequence has been reversed. The work casts retrospective light on the scores that preceded it: in its meditation on the creation of the world and humanity's place in that scheme, it fleshes out the birth-to-death programmes that seemed so perplexing in the fourth symphony and fourth string quartet, and provides a *raison d'être* for the sublime carolling of the soloists in the Triple Concerto. Underlining these relationships are quotations from symphony and concerto in the new evening-long 'music for voices and instruments', with other less literal references to the sound worlds of earlier periods. Encouraged by the composer, it's possible to view *The Mask* as the summation of a life's work, and on the evidence of the European première at the Proms last Monday that judgment is not entirely misplaced.

What we have, to borrow Tippett's description of his third symphony, is a hybrid work, part secular oratorio, part dramatic symphony after the Berlioz model, part opera, for which he adopts the label of a 'masque'. It falls into two halves of around 45 minutes each, each of them separated into five movements, and with the whole edifice pivoted about the pair of movements that straddles the interval. The first part retells the history of the world with a rich mixture of imagery and literary reference, of which the movement titles alone give some idea: 'Presence', 'Creation of the World by Music', 'Jungle', 'The Ice-Cap moves South-North', 'Dream of the Paradise Garden'. The second half abandons chronological narrative for an anthropocentric view of the world, its horrors and its ecstacies.

The text is Tippett's own, compiled as usual from a variety of sources even more heterogeneous than in previous works. Tippett has revealed that Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man* in its television and written forms provided a major impulse in beginning the project, and that Annie Dillard's neo-transcendentalist *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* added further momentum. Both authors are extensively quoted — Dillard's vivid descriptions of the insect world form the set pieces within the 'Jungle' movement; 'The Ice-cap' interweaves chunks of Bronowski with quotations from Manley Hopkins, Traherne and Eliot. Elsewhere other writers bubble up from the amalgam: Yeats (couplets from 'Hugh Talk' and 'Under Ben Bulben'), *Paradise Lost*, Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, Anna Akhmatova, Mary Renault. The recipe is a dangerously exotic one, and Tippett's libretti in the past have sailed very close to the wind. Here, though, I think he brings off his scheme triumphantly, with very few of the embarrassing moments which disfigure *The Ice Break* and parts of *The Knot Garden*. The lack of a clear continuity of ideas through the work is a help rather than a hindrance in this; the movements appear like points of illumination around the central idea of humanity's place in the world, not essaying the glib answer, but remaining content to pose the right questions.

In the ten movements there are only two musical failures, and they are vastly outweighed by the outstanding successes. I find the 'Jungle' movement, juxtaposing onomatopoeic animal cries with the Dillard descriptions, thin and short-winded in a work that generally makes its transitions with great conviction, while the 'Three Songs' that constitute the ninth movement fail to carry the weight the work appears to require at that point before the short, wordless finale. So much of the score, however, teems with invention that such lapses are soon forgotten. No Tippett score since the third symphony shows such a happy knack for alighting upon apt and memorable musical metaphors; nowhere in his output are the ideas so well conceived in terms of voice and instrument, even if the demands made upon the chorus are sometimes extreme. The creative energy that appeared to be absent in the fourth symphony and parts of the triple concerto is fully restored: from the massive accumulations of choral and orchestral sound in the opening bars the music never slackens, constantly flecked with oblique glances at earlier works — a chord progression or knockabout percussion break from *The Knot Garden*, clattering wind and xylophones from the *Priam* period, tendrils of string sound that instantly conjure up the Triple Concerto, wordless choral passages first used for the religious ecstacies of *The Vision of Saint Augustine*.

Three movements in particular seem to me as fine as anything Tippett has achieved before. The 'Dream of the Paradise Garden', which has at its centre an aqueously lyrical sarabande for a trio of flutes and a harp, something which could have been lifted straight out of *The Knot Garden* or *The Ice Break*, before resolving into an enchanted quartet for horns. 'The Triumph of Life' sets a good deal of Shelley's unfinished poem and tags on to it a description of the poet's death, the whole intricately linked movement underpinned by a remorseless ground bass and illuminated by the fierce glare of Mahlerian trumpets. It's followed by 'A Mirror of Whitening Light', setting more Bronowski texts in the form of three preludes and three verses based on a mediaeval plainchant. The reference to Maxwell Davies in the title and the manner of working cannot be accidental, though the form of the movement is entirely original.

Everywhere there are felicities too numerous to mention. Even the 'Jungle' movement is almost redeemed by a gorgeously baroque duet for the soprano and mezzo soloists. The eighth movement 'Hiroshima, mon amour' (though Tippett has apparently never seen the Resnais film) takes lines from Akhmatova's *Requiem* and *Poem without a Hero* and gives them to the soprano soloist in a style close to the finale of third symphony, always threatening to yield to a blues inflection, and accompanies them with

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the male voices of the chorus in hummed harmony. It is devastatingly effective. The Rilke 'song' resolves into a passionate aria for the bass soloist in which the surging string lines that energise so much of the work are channelled into a forthright and grandly stirring rhetorical moment.

The Mask of Time is fearsomely difficult, demanding a virtuoso chorus as well as soloists. Two of the soloists, Faye Robinson and John Cheek, had taken part in the first performance in Boston in April with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which commissioned it, conducted by Colin Davis. The conductor at the Albert Hall was Andrew Davis and the orchestra the BBC Symphony, and they conveyed the spirit and the energy of the score unflaggingly. The BBC Singers and the BBC Choral Society took on the hard work of the choral writing; they appeared to have mastered it triumphantly. □

TELEVISION
Mary Harron

Unromantic

FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA has a lot to answer for. Ever since *The Godfather* a myth has developed that the Mafia is an organisation of self-improving emigrés, bound together by blood ties and a quaint Sicilian code of loyalty. As American journalists have been understandably reluctant to investigate the organisation too deeply, our image of the Mafia is based on the romantic version we are given in Hollywood films and television mini-series. (The rumour that the Mafia have bought into Hollywood may explain this curious sympathy). We now see the Mafia the way that they like to see themselves: as criminals, but also as Men of Honour. Thames' new seven-part series **Crime Inc.** thankfully concentrates on what the Mafia actually *does*: which means blow-torching rivals, hanging informers from meat hooks and running America's most successful commercial enterprise.

The first episode laid out the organisation of the Mafia 'families'. (A term, incidentally, which has nothing to do with blood relatives; it was adopted in the Thirties because the bosses thought it sounded nicer than 'mob'.) The opening scene showed Jimmy 'The Weasel' Fratianno, former boss of Los Angeles and the most important Mafia informant to date. A weary, almost professorial looking character with a grey beard, Fratianno described one incident where a gang member fell into disfavour. 'So we brought him in the house and choked him — that was it,' he said, adding by way of casual explanation. 'He was a member of our family.'

This first episode, called 'All in the Family', made it clear that the Mafia have far more to fear from each other than they have from the police, who in the past could get them only on tax evasion. Honour among thieves, or murderers, is in reality most fragile: heads are blown off (and there were endless gory photographs to prove it) for insubordination, for incompetence, because of jealousy — or simply out of pique. The only successes the FBI have scored have been through turncoats, and *Crime Inc.* is equally dependent on these informants: as well as Fratianno there was some archive film of Joe Valachi and interviews with two henchmen, Gerry Denono and Joey Cantalupo.

The programme never explained why these men had turned — to save their skins presumably — and each one spoke about his crimes as if they had been committed by someone else. The justification was always the same. As Fratianno put it, 'I don't know, I never had much feeling about it. They were killers themselves — they weren't innocent.' However, this raises certain doubts about whether the programme should have relied so insistently on the testimony of former Mafiosi. According to Lucky Luciano's own reverent account of the Mafia, the stricture that murders only took place between gang members was abandoned 40 years ago. The notion that 'we only kill each other' is one of the mob's most cherished illusions. (The other, as *Crime Inc.* points out, is 'We don't deal in narcotics' although heroin is the financial basis of their empire.)

However, Martin Short's series is brave and comprehensive and admirably researched (the film clips are extraordinary). All the bases are touched: the way Prohibition unwittingly turned an ill organised bunch of street gangs into a corporation, the entry into the labour unions, the gradual adoption of respectability. All that is really doubtful about *Crime Inc.* is the style. The use of thudding dramatic music, the shock effect editing, the way the camera lingers over gory images is all Hollywood — and Hollywod imagery is what a documentary, on this subject above all, should be fighting against.

For **Aspel & Company** (LWT) to team up Margaret Thatcher with Barry Manilow was a sublime idea, and the prospect of these two frosted blonde egotists vying for domination was too good to be true. And it was too good to be true. Manilow refused to be upstaged (as did Margaret) and in the end they were interviewed separately.

What we got on Saturday night was a contrast in manipulation. Thatcher, being on alien showbiz territory, fared worst. Her entrance was stilted: caught between a purposeful stride and blushing hesitancy, she lurched towards her chair. Michael Aspel repressed his usual dry wit and read out the carefully prepared (and no doubt vetted) questions with cautious sycophancy: How *does* she cope, how *does* she keep her dresses so immaculate, how *does* she deal with that spiteful press?

In spite of all this accommodation, Margaret Thatcher's attempts to unbend were rather unseemly. The attempts at roguish humour were chilling and, when the audience burst into peals of laughter at an accidental *double entendre*, she looked startled and ploughed on, uncomprehending, but with a fixed smile. Well, flexibility was never her strong point.

The reptilian Mr Manilow was in his element. This is a man you wouldn't touch with gloves on, but his TV banter is faultless. But God bless the camera, because it never lies. As with Thatcher, the eyes gave him away: his are hard and cold as marbles and as unnerving in their way as Margaret's glittering, slightly mad stare. □

THEATRE
Naseem Khan

Tightrope act

Wild Honey
CHEKHOV *Lyttelton*
The Boyfriend
SANDY WILSON *Old Vic*
The Sea Saw Red
IOU *Almeida*

'Vodka and squalor and men trying to kill me' will hardly strike anyone as an apt description of a Chekhov play. But part of the strength of Michael Frayn's radical reworking of **Wild Honey**, as it's now called, is that it confounds expectations. Boiled down or cut down by Frayn from some six hours' performance time, the new product is a sturdy yet discomfiting mixture of farce, violence, tenderness and tragedy.

The mise-en-scène is familiar enough. Here we are on an impoverished mortgaged estate, somewhere in the rural back woods of Russia. Slowly the habitués of Anna Petrovna's circle make their way through the high, dry summer grass and slim birch trees at back of the set, to congregate on the terrace: the doggily playful young country doctor, his military father, an elderly land-owner, Anna Petrovna's newly married stepson, Sergey, and a nervy female chemistry student. Last to appear — naturally — is the area's own celebrity, self-styled moralist and intellectual, Platonov.

Easy, leisured, privileged it may seem, but it is all a precarious balancing act that serves to help them skirt the unpleasant things of life. In the meantime they make hay (metaphorically speaking): the women nurse a passion for Platonov. The men are wistfully half in love with Anna Petrovna, a fiery young widow. And her principal creditor, a vulgar example of the nouveau riche, refrains from sending in writs since she clearly might marry money. So far not unfamiliar Chekhovian territory, but once Sergey's new wife, Sofya, enters, we shift ground.

Deeper in the birch wood that same evening, the stage is full of confused, distinctly comical comings and goings. Sofya, in hot pursuit of Platonov, is being hunted by her husband and nearly collides with Anna Petrovna, similarly chasing 'our village Socrates', while she eludes the land-owner. Meantime Platonov flees them and finds himself making love to the chemistry student. 'Do you love me?' she asks tremulously. 'Not at all, my precious,' he replies with relief, 'That's why I'm kissing you.' She bursts into tears and flees, and the game goes on.

But it can't stay all a game. For while Anna Petrovna, an able woman bored to death by idleness, is willing to keep an affair with Platonov a harmless diversion, Sofya is more absolute. His marriage inevitably wrecked, Platonov weakly considers the 'new life' held out by all his female would-be reformers.

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Like life on the summer estate, *Wild Honey* is a balancing act. Its focus wavers between an initial concern for Anna Petrovna and the subsequent superb development of Platonov. Although Michael Frayn has already weeded out a number of sub-plots, there is still more than one play left here. The wonder of it is that it is all handled so deftly: farce shades into pathos, tragedy is cut short by sheer lunatic absurdity. As Platonov disintegrates, in his squalid home, rapacious women climb through the window and batten at the door like something out of a conjurer's nightmare. Self-disgust vies with self-delusion, independence of mind with inertia, cynicism with the outer reaches of idealistic optimism. It is a wonderful, rich circus of a play, directed by Christopher Morahan with authority and wit. Performances could hardly be bettered — most centrally Ian McKellen's magnificent Platonov, but also Charlotte Cornwall's emancipated Petrovna, Brewster Mason's retired colonel and Heather Tobias as Platonov's long-suffering, plain, uncomprehending wife. John Gunter's set provides birch forests, summer terraces, hovel and, astonishingly, the illusion of passing trains about to plunge off the stage into the stalls.

To go from *Wild Honey* to **The Boy Friend** is like leaving a main course for a soufflé, or for what should be a soufflé. Christopher Hewitt's revival of Sandy Wilson's Twenties pastiche sadly turns out to be a pretty heavy thing. It is actually a dicier product than generally acknowledged. Set in the context of the random development round Waterloo, with winos opposite watching the arrival of the first-night audience, gamely dressed in Twenties style and descending from vintage motors, its unreality is underlined. In fact it could work only if played with utter conviction as an innocent fairy tale of poor little rich folk. This the production does not do. It guys the original throughout, nudging the audience to laugh cosily at the excesses of squealing debs, naughty French and old buffer British. Anna Quayle as Madame Dubonnet, a magisterial headmistress with a throbbing heart of gold, stands out and the lyrics and music last. But played so archly, *The Boy Friend* becomes a show about people with too much money, too little sense and absolutely no charm.

The Sea Saw Red, performed by IOU and presented by the Almeida Theatre in what they euphemistically call the 'courtyard' of an old Clerkenwell school, is the latest work of one of our best thought-of performance art groups. In the concrete space between the building and the surrounding wall, the group have constructed a set that combines strangeness with a documentary realism. Lines of washing spread past meticulous beds of vegetables to a two-storey wooden shack. In spirit it is somewhere between Brueghel and *Cold Comfort Farm*. Events that emerge include the descent from a tree of a human-sized caterpillar, ravaging insects, a carpet salesman and an unexplained raconteur on a rusty bike. For the most part the rural couple slowly living out their lives in the shack fail to notice these surreal goings on. Beautiful to look at, it had an undeniable if rather fey charm. However, it suffered from a sameness of tone that, despite the wealth of invention, made an hour or so a long stretch. It all needed a stronger overall sense of structure. □

CRAFTS
Peter Dormer

Dear Mr Dougan

FEW PEOPLE know or care what the Crafts Council does or where it is. A new Director has been appointed but there is no press coverage — no politics, no malign gossip: no interest. Quite unlike the hell of a row which broke out when the Gummer-like Luke Rittner succeeded the leftish inclined Roy Shaw at the Arts Council.

The Crafts Council is a quango with a royal charter administering money from the government (about £2 million a year). Its new Director, David Dougan, succeeds Victor Margrie, the Council's first Director, in October. Currently Dougan directs Northern Arts, the most successful of the 13 Regional Arts Associations. A former television journalist, author of books on industrial history, advisor to the House of Commons select committee on Education, Science and the Arts, Dougan was one of those tipped to succeed Roy Shaw at the Arts Council. Dougan didn't enter the race but his ideas have been influential; he wants democracy, participation and a wider spread of resources to the regions.

The Crafts Council employs 50 people and is 13 years old. It began as the Crafts Advisory Committee; the mid-wife was Viscount (now Lord) Eccles, a Ted Heath Paymaster General-cum-Arts Minister. The Council's history has been quiet, and even that garrulous compendium of ego and printing errors — *The Culture Gap* by former Labour Arts Minister, Hugh Jenkins — mentions the Crafts Council only to comment on the prettiness of the Council's women staff, the coffee and an increase to the Director's salary.

There was a row in 1982 (which continues to smoulder) over conservation. The Council's 'Conservation Committee' thought too little was being done by the Council to conserve our applied arts heritage and said it was failing to carry out agreed policy. The Committee resigned, *en masse*, in a messy muddle of accusation and wholemeal-loaf hysteria more usually contained within Iris Murdoch novels. Subsequently the conservation department was made redundant. The Crafts Council's basic problem is lack of money coupled with an inability to reach a balance in its stance between modern, innovative work and tradition.

The Council runs a very professional exhibition gallery in Waterloo Place, SW1, publishes books and a much respected applied arts journal — *Crafts*. The other departments include 'Regional' which provides grants and support for craftworkers throughout England and Wales, as well as involving itself in marketing and 'education'.

The current burgeoning of the professional crafts and applied arts owes a lot to the Crafts Council which has had to claw back for the crafts a reputation which was all but subverted by the rubbish of the semi-amateur. Unfortunately the public perception of craft is still derived from the crafty ware purveyed at Covent Garden, the Royal Festival Hall and 'craft' markets throughout the land. Dougan would do well to imitate Christ and start turning over some stalls in these 'temples'. At least he'd make the *Guardian* pages.

Critics complain that the Council has pushed craft too much towards second rate *art*. This criticism is just but also misleading. The majority of people represented by the Council are good maker-designers. Indeed, some of the most interesting product design is beginning to occur in the crafts although few people in education, design and industry have recognised this.

At heart, and quite simply and more specifically than either the Arts or the Design Council, the Crafts Council is a protector of a range of values which the 'right' has tried too hard to arrogate to itself. Many people become craftworker-designers because they want to retain the maximum direction over their lives, give the maximum of worth in their work (and hence to their clients) and have the minimum of outside interference.

And so, my open memorandum to David Dougan goes thus: As you know the crafts and applied arts are valuable because they are more demotic than fine art. Pots, furniture, ornament, textiles and the like constitute a domestic, accessible art of relative cheapness. And, of course, the applied arts can be used skilfully to humanise and temper the built or man-made environment. For a quick, commercial example, note that the new owners of Sealink want to ditch its cheap, plastic image. There are many craftworker-designers whose skills could do a first-class job on those interiors — if only someone would make the connections.

People are ignorant of the Crafts Council. This ignorance will not be changed without more money. The budget needs to build to £20 million over five years and stay there in real terms subsequently. Then the Crafts Council can make an effective intervention in the public domains of architecture, education and design.

What is the justification?

People like crafts, there is more public demand for it than there is for fine art. Second, craftsmen and craftswomen run small businesses which generate work for other small businesses and services; they circulate their money quickly. Third, and most important, there is in both design and design education, a paucity of innovatory, expressive work that is both attractive and well-made. The large manufacturer is dependent upon the artist and the designer for innovation — the craftworker too has ideas to offer.

Ideas are generated through debate and no institution thrives without it. *Crafts*, your 'in house' magazine, has an international reputation but, to be in the vanguard of ideas, it needs independence. Grant aid it and let it run itself even when it means that it contains criticism of 'official' policy. You will always have a right of reply.

By all means press the cause of the regions but do not spread the money too thin, it'll be wasted. Finally, for God's sake change the logo, layout and colour scheme of the Crafts Council's press releases — no one can take seriously what look like missives from a second-rate perfumery. □

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FILMS
Francis Wheen

Dog days

Hambone and Hillie (PG)
Premiere, Shaftesbury Avenue
Star Trek III — The Search For Spock (PG)
Plaza
Fire and Ice (PG)
ABC, Shaftesbury Avenue
Children of the Corn (18)
Studio, Oxford Circus; Cinecenta, Panton St
Cannonball Run II (PG)
Leicester Square Theatre

The recipe for summer in the cinema is so old that Mrs Beeton might have written it. Take one adult, two children, plus limitless quantities of Westler hot dogs, choco-mint Cornettos and Kia-Ora orange juice; pop them into the local Odeon for a couple of hours and simmer gently.

You might think that the crucial ingredient of this rather disgusting casserole — the movie — had altered considerably in recent years: a generation weaned on video nasties (has anyone yet made *I Spit On Your Cot*?) and mega-dollar special-effects extravaganzas (*ET, Star Wars* and many another) is unlikely to tolerate old Rin-Tin-Tin films. But you'd be wrong — at least if the makers of **Hambone and Hillie** are to be believed. They have given us a movie which might have been produced at any time in the past 50 years. The co-stars are the octogenarian Hillie (played, believe it or not, by Lillian Gish) and the spaniel-eyed pooch Hambone, who seems to be a cross-breed of Lassie and Greyfriars Bobby.

Hillie loses her beloved mutt at JFK airport just as she's flying home to Los Angeles. Searching for his mistress, dear little Hambone sets off on a coast-to-coast trek reminiscent of *The Incredible Journey*. I need hardly add that the dumb chum has plenty of adventures, canine love affairs and brushes with death before being reunited with Lillian Gish in (yes) the final frame. As Oscar Wilde said of the death of Little Nell, you'd need a heart of stone not to roar with laughter. But then I don't suppose *Hambone and Hillie* was made for people like me. It is aimed at small girls — who, as we all know, adore anything on four legs. Or do they? I shall watch the box-office receipts with interest.

We all know, too, that little boys want whizz-bang frolics in space. Even as a whippersnapper I never cared for the weekly instalments of Dan Dare in *Eagle*, but I expect I was the odd one out: thousands of boys made Marcus Morris rich. Whoever they were, they'll love **Star Trek III**, in which the Starship Enterprise defies grammatical pedants by continuing 'to boldly go where no man has gone before'. The dialogue is wince-inducing ('The death of Spock is like an open wound,' Admiral Kirk muses. 'It seems that I have left the noblest part of myself back there') but Trekkies don't want Shakespearean rhythms. What they do require is pseudo-scientific nonsense, and of this there is an abundance. 'Stand by to energise!' 'Aye, sir, warp drive standing by.' 'Where's the damn anti-matter inducer?' The goodies are all clean-cut American types: the baddies (The Klingons) look like heavy-metal fans who've had too much Carlsberg Special at a Motorhead concert. You won't be surprised to learn that the goodies win. There is one touching moment in the last great struggle between Kirk and the Klingon leader, in which all the ray-guns are abandoned and Kirk simply kicks his foe in the balls; the only trouble is that Stephen Spielberg made the joke first, in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, when Harrison Ford coolly shot his Arab enemy.

Fire and Ice is a much less appealing tale, a nasty animated film which comes within the *genre* known as 'sword and sorcery' (war-locks, dragon-hawks — you know the kind of thing). Its director is Ralph Bakshi, who made *Fritz the Cat* in the early Seventies, but don't let that fool you; this is racist and sexist rubbish. The goodies are Aryans with rippling pectorals; the baddies are black, hunched, Calibanesque creatures who are charmingly referred to as 'sub-humans'. The kidnapped Princess Teegra, clad in a near-invisible bikini, is almost raped by the sub-humans more than once. Avoid at all costs.

The same can be said of **Children of the Corn** — or, as the publicity material insists, *Stephen King's Children of the Corn*. It seems to me that a period of silence on Stephen King's part would now be welcome; in the last two months alone he has begotten *The Dead Zone* and *Firestarter*. His latest 'shocker' is an incomprehensible and unfrightening bit of poppycock about some kids in Nebraska who lurk in the corn-fields and massacre grown-ups for religious reasons which are left unexplained. Give us all a break, eh, Steve?

I missed the first couple of minutes of **Cannonball Run II**. I was just finishing my coffee and croissants beforehand in a Soho *patisserie* when Jean-Luc Godard and Colin MacCabe sat down at the next table. I stared at the great man, considering whether I should ask him to accompany me to the preview theatre. After watching *Cannonball Run II* I was glad I hadn't presumed upon his time. If you've ever wondered what a star-studded turkey looks like, wonder no more. The cast includes Frank Sinatra, Burt Reynolds, Shirley MacLaine, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr, Susan Anton and Telly Savalas, all of whom ham it up desperately in an effort to make the film justify its billing as an 'odd-ball, action-packed comedy'. There isn't one decent joke in all the 108 minutes of misogyny, fast cars and Arab-baiting. In short, this is a week in which even the most dedicated film-buff would be well advised to take a holiday — or to share a croissant with Jean-Luc Godard. □

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FIRST PERSON

Bill Greenwell

In the dark

I HATE being ignorant, but I end up ignorant more than half of the time. I have a really morbid fear of being faced with an expert in almost any field — literally, when it's a farmer — and having to stand there dithering and generally wringing my lips.

Of course, the trick is to look singularly knowledgeable, isn't it, to hurry the proffered analysis along with the kind of timely, alternating Yes or No which landed Pooh in lumber when he was hoping for a honey hand-out at Owl's and was read a lecture instead. You get them to skip through the complexities in the hope that there'll be some genially untechnical advice at the end. But there isn't. When they say 'Got that?' and all you have is a stick with two wrong ends, you are in a worse position than when you started.

You don't have to be a computer whizz to get my small grey cells colliding in anxiety. Just going to have a butcher's at the butcher's is bad enough for me, as I'll get round to in a tick. But just about anything scientific — by which I mean something with moving parts, mechanical or not — has me speedily scuppered.

We proceed like this. Something is malfunctioning in some appliance or other, of the sort that's improperly designated 'domestic' (most of them are as wild as woolly mammoths). But our society is brimming with experts who are trained to untangle, inspect, twiddle with and generally tame every particular pet hatred of a machine going, so you let your fingers do the walking and, if it's working, you phone.

What you don't do — well, you do, but you wish you didn't — is attempt to explain your tribulations to whoever answers. Either you take the mountain of trouble to the local Mahomet or, if it's big, you let Mahomet on to your premises (false) to sort the offensive article out *in situ*.

Conversation begins with a breeze behind it.

'What would you say was wrong, sir?'

'Erm, well, it's not working of course, and then, erm, hoojit, you know — tsk! having a brainstorm. . .'

'The ampule flange playing up by the looks of it.'

'*Ampule*! yes, yes, erm, the very. . .'

'Have you noticed any guttural spinnakers worritting the banjaz lately? Dear me, who put this in, sir, must have been squiffy — haha — and an ET/77XC Super Intensive, too, haven't seen one of these for donkeys' years, still, probably can do something, spare parts for this a packet, if they make them.'

'Is it, erm, serious, erm, a long job? I. . .'

'Well, you see this *(the back's off)* fledgeling spingle?'

'Yes.' The first big fib.

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'Well, as you know, the spingle calcifies the lickspittle anti-galvaniser and, when that blows, the criss-cross-quizzicals in the banjax go backwards instead of forwards, so there's serious thrungeing in the under-epidermis, with me?'

'Uh-huh.' Perdition ahoy.

'So you insert an AC spanner, twist the sprat by the left springle, and it'll be right as rain. Actually, sir, it'd cost you a silly amount if I fixed it. I'd just twist it yourself. Easy. Right (*back is back on, bag is in hand*), I'll be off.'

'Er, just give me that quickly again.'

He does; leaves; you get someone else out and run off pronto, leaving excuses littering your path of departure.

But, as I say, even the butcher is menacing. When Chinese take-aways first arrived, but before wok-schlock, I fancied a shot at serving up nos 49, 58 and 9. Spare Ribs was 9. I trembled into the butcher's, where any question — *eg* 'side or back?' — has me sniffling vacantly and asked for some, erm, Spare Ribs. No problems: they were only three bob for three pounds. Three bob! I thought, the Chinese are laughing all the way to the stock exchange. He wrapped something in newspaper; I paid; and scarpered smiling.

What I'd bought was not Spare Ribs at all. It was ribs, spare, foolish pets for the chewing of. I steered a safe course away from the sawdust floors for some years after that brilliant bit of ignorance.

So, *bliss?* Whoever reckoned ignorance was blissful must have had a defective banjax in his Super Intensive; must, in fact, have been blissfully ignorant of ignorance. □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2832 Set by A. Boteman

Time to update some children's classics for the present generation. Extracts of up to 120 words, please, from *Five go to Pot, Greyfriars Grows Grass, The House at Punk Corner*, or similar, by 10 August.

No 2829 Set by Maud Gracechurch

Apt anagrams of the names of paintings, sculptures or musical works.

Report By Mercy Dash

One of *Her* favourite sayings is 'never apologise, never explain', but I still feel that I should offer some expression of regret for the tone of last week's report. Mr Sneerwell doesn't seem to realise that he isn't God's gift to the Complex, just because, by an unfortunate concatenation of circumstances, he got to judge the comp in his very first week. She-who has put him straight back on to first-stage sorting but I have a nasty suspicion that She isn't wholly displeased with his style. So you had better pull your socks up. Actually, the anagrams turned out better than I thought they were going to — after, that is, we'd shredded all those which didn't have the right number of letters, weren't at all apposite or were about something *not* asked for, like a play or a novel. Congratulations to the winners and two green notes for each anagram printed.

Venus de Milo: Mend us, lovie. GEORGE MOOR

The Last Supper: Pete, pals — Thurs. WALT ARMSTRONG

Der Rosenkavalier: Risked a lover near. JIMMIE PEARSE

The Laughing Cavalier: I have huge grin at call. KATIE MALLETT

Land of Hope and Glory: Oh, do play for England.
Calais Pier: Sea-rail pic. S. M. MANSELL

'When I'm sixty-four . . .' How if I turn sexy . . .m? SID FIELD

When did you last see your father?:
Dad, eh? O, truly, I refuse to say when.
Self-portrait: RA's trite flop. NINA HIBBIN

Das Rheingold: Hard-line gods. C. HAMEY

The Sound of Music: Some found it such RON SOUTHEY

When did you last see your father?:
Today, sure, under the sofa. Why lie?
Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg: Boring singers venture mere din. NOEL PETTY

Unfinished symphony: O my! Hid his pens. Funny! BOB SCOTT

The Rake's Progress: Gropes her; streaks. JOHN O'BYRNE

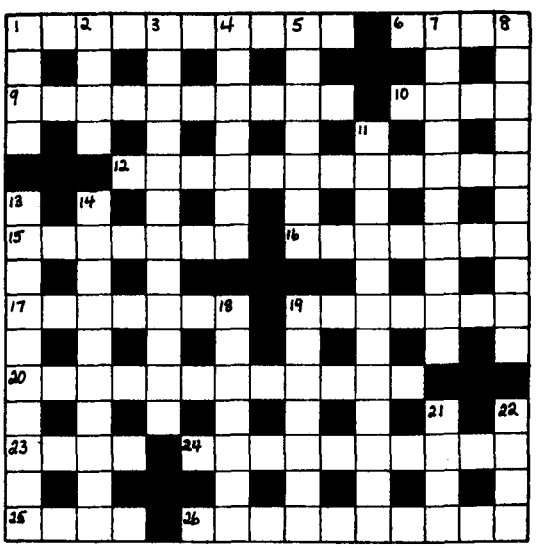
Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band:
Chart LP. Beatle-songs are superbly penned. WILL BELLENGER

Superb early Beatles-penned chart LP song. GERARD BENSON

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon: Odd lasses in loving melee. KEN RUDGE

Weekend Crossword 1448

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1448, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 7 August.



Name _____

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_____

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ACROSS

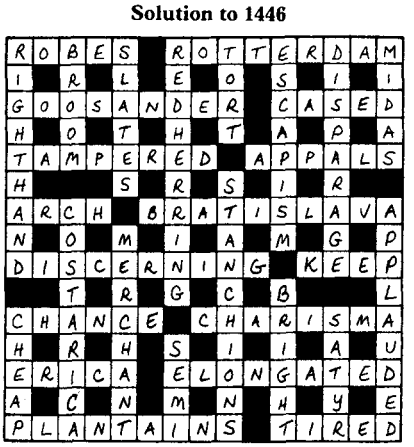
1. Piece of meat chopped up but caught with a mallet (4,6)
6. Blackleg who has a place in this cabinet (4)
9. Others came down under control (10)
10. Before long a girl is without nothing (4)
12. The local commanding officer frees part of the country (4,8)
15. Ribbon colour gradually diminished (7)
16. It is obvious that the occasion is about fish (7)
17. An aid for the lame which might make one care about insolence (7)
19. Age is a point before which income is distributed (7)
20. Sent away when depots are transferred on a minor route (6,6)
23. The animal retreats in a rush (4)
24. Drink turns into meaningless talk about a team (10)
25. Lots of games for television (4)
26. Put out when one is in a violent flow after a mixture of 10 and 11 (10)

DOWN

1. Game bird? (4)
2. State service (4)
3. He shows one the world in a plane (12)
4. Look after when about to be ill at the finish (7)
5. Something ugly climbed up into sight (7)
7. Engineering device which has an opponent among the expert (10)
8. Recovered without individuals acting as a substitute for a surgeon (10)
11. Providing the energy to make the stay-at-home girl go with a sailor (12)
13. Bits kept in store when there are animals to bind up (5,5)
14. A ring with a faint smell, seeming like a precious stone (10)
18. Boy embraces girl to form a fresh attachment (7)
19. Spoil company in turning up as an inventor (7)
21. Language made up by a friend and me (4)
22. Irritation of doing needlework without something sharp (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1446



Prizewinners to 1446

A.J. Burl (London SW4)
Mary Long (Stanhoe, W. Norfolk)
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TUC NATIONAL EDUCATION CENTRE

The TUC is now offering a number of appointments for assistants in its new residential college based in Hornsey, North London.

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For further details and application form, please write to:

Mr L. Murray, The General Secretary, Trades Union Congress, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.

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Further information from: **Kevin West, Festival Director, D.H. Lawrence Centenary Festival, Craft Workshops, Mansfield Road, Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. Tel 0773 768222.**
Closing date for applications Friday 17 August 1984.

POEU Post Office Engineering Union

ASSISTANT SECRETARY VACANCY

Applications are invited for the post of Assistant Secretary which has arisen in the Post Office Engineering Union.

Candidates must be able to demonstrate a record of service to the trade union movement. Applications will be treated in confidence.

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Application forms and further particulars may be obtained by *written request* from the **General Secretary, Post Office Engineering Union, Greystoke House, 150 Brunswick Road, Ealing, London W5 1AW.**

The closing date for receipt of completed application forms is by first post on Friday 31 August 1984.

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LISTINGS

THURS 26 JULY

LONDON Miners' Dispute — City Support Meeting. 6pm-7.30pm Bishopsgate Inst. 230 Bishopsgate, EC2 (nr Liverpool St. stn.) Spkrs incl Bob Morrison (Kent NUM) Ivan Beavis (NALGO), Richard Lynch (SERTUC). **Sponsored by SERTUC/Westminster & City TC.**

CAMDEN 'Sex & Politics' — Women's Rights, Gay Rights: The Challenge for Labour. Spkr. Maureen Colquhoun. 8pm Camden Centre, Bidborough St, NW1. **Org. City & Westminster Sth. Labour Party.**

FRI 27 JULY

NOTTINGHAM Shelter Annual Housing Conference begins (to 29 July) University of Nottingham. **Details: Tom Mars, Shelter, 157 Waterloo Rd, SE1 8FX 01-633 9377.**

LONDON 'Victory Celebration' Social to mark 12th Anniversary of release of 5 dockers from Pentonville imprisoned under the Heath Government's Industrial Relations Act. Music/food/bar. 7pm '7 Dials Club', 48 Earlham St, WC2. Adm. £3/£1.50 unwaged. All proceeds to NUM. **Org. Cities of London & Westminster Trades Cncl. 01-286 4782.**

SAT 28 JULY

BRISTOL 'Labour Women's History in the South West' 2pm TGWU Offices, Victoria Rd. All welcome. **Org. Labour Heritage Women's Research Cttee Christine Collette, 16 Malmesbury Rd, Leigh, Wilts. 0793 750863.**

CAMDEN Afro-Caribbean Elderly Grp. 'Carribbean Evening' 8pm-1pm Swiss Cottage Community Centre, 19 Winchester Rd, NW3. Adm £4 incl. food, rum punch, calypso/soca music. **Details/Tickets: Anne Telemaque, Area 3 Social Services, 156 West End Lane, NW6 or direct from Swiss Cottage Community Centre.**

LONDON 'Support the Struggle of the Tamil People'. Assemble 12 noon Hyde Park. March to rally in Trafalgar Sq. Bring your own banner. **Details: Sabes 01-387 1225 (day) 340 5216 (eves)/Bala 202 7190.**

SUN 29 JULY

BIRMINGHAM W. Midlands CND Regional council 2pm UCATT, Gough St, Creche available. **Contact W. Midlands CND 54 Allison St, Digbeth B5 5TH. 021-632 6909.**

TUES 31 JULY

CAMDEN 'Nicaragua' open meeting incl. slide show and talk by recently returned women's delegation. Discn. on 'women, race and peace in Nicaragua'. 7.30pm Irish Centre, Murray St, NW1. Everyone welcome (stairs but help on hand).

WED 1 AUG

LIVERPOOL 'Policing the Miners' Strike — a State of Siege'. Spkrs Jim Coulter (Woolley Pit, Yorks), Margaret Simey, (Merseyside Police Cttee.), Jon Brouble (M'side Campaign against Police Bill), 7.30pm AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant. **Details: Michael Allen 051 207 0103.**

LONDON Special Poetry Event in Aid of the NUM. 7.30pm Purcell Rm, South Bank, SE1. Poets both inside and outside the Trade Unions express solidarity with the miners and their families in this benefit performance by Dannie Abse, Lynton Kwesi Johnson, Joolz, Gavin Ewart and many more. Adm. £2 Bkings. 01-928 6421. **Details: 01-699 5265/01-800 7901.**

THURS 2 AUG

LONDON Meeting of London brnch. All Party Campaign for a Scottish Assembly. 8pm County Hall, SE1.

SAT 4 AUG

BIRMINGHAM Acting for Peace in the '80s: Principles and Practice — exploring inner and outer dimensions of peacemaking. Woodbrooke College, Selly Oak. **Details: Stuart Morton, Woodbrooke EMS, 1046 Bristol Rd, D29 6LJ.**

SUN 5 AUG

GRAVESEND 'Lanterns on the Thames' Hiroshima commemoration. 7.15 assemble town war memorial, Clarence Place, Windmill Hill. Prayers for peace, procession through town to riverside to float lanterns for rememberance. Assembly point 5 mins Gravesend BR Stn. **Details: Gravesend 66701.**

FORTHCOMING

6 AUG LONDON Hiroshima Day Commemoration 12 noon-1pm Tavistock Sq, WC1. **Details: Camden CND Box 34, NW5 2QF. Sally Laird 794 9847/Averil Ridgway 485 3037 (eves).**

6 AUG LONDON 'Restrictive Practices and Professionalism in British Architecture. 1830-1960 by Hetty Startup. History Workshop London Seminar 7pm The Plough, Museum St, WC1.

9 AUG LONDON International Day of Solidarity with women of South Africa ANC meeting 7pm Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, E8. Spkrs include Glenys Kinnock, Nghatanga (SWAPO), Edith Yengwa (ANC).

12 AUG-28 AUG 'Travel to Nicaragua' tour of country, meetings with different mass organisations and Government. See firsthand the gains of the revolution. **Org. New Socialist/Progressive Tours, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1. 01-226 6747.**

18 AUG LONDON Demonstration for British withdrawal from Ireland marking 15h Anniversary of troops going in. Assemble Speakers Corner 1pm. **Details: 18 August Demo. Cttee. 27 Clerkenwell Close, EC1.**

19 AUG LONDON Index on Censorship Benefit. Dame Peggy Ashcroft & Gregory de Polnay with The Galliard Trio. 8pm Riverside Studios, Crisp Rd, Hammersmith, W6. **Tickets: £3/£2.50 unwaged from 748 3354.**

25 AUG BIRMINGHAM 'Working with the Media' CND day school 10am-5pm Trade Union Resource Centre, Frederick St. Adm. £2 (bring packed lunch). **Org. W. Midlands CND, 54 Allison St, Digbeth, B5.**

1-2 SEPT DURHAM 'Making our Future: Change in Women's Education'. Residential conf. for those working with women. Workshops on health, community work, counselling etc. **Details: Eileen Aird, Organising Tutor in Women's Education, WEA Offices, 51 Grainger St, Newcastle upon Tyne 1.**

4 SEPT BRIGHTON Labour Solidarity Campaign meeting 5pm Old Ship Hotel. Spkrs Alan Tuffin, Roy Hattersley, Peter Shore, John Smith. **Details: LSC 53 Lancaster Grove, London NW5 01-435 6914.**

7-9 SEPT BIRMINGHAM West Midlands CND regions & areas development/campaign strategy weekend. St. Francis Hall, Birmingham University. **Details/biking: WM CND, 54 Allison St. Digbeth, Birmingham B5 5TH. 021-632 6909.**

12-14 SEPT BRADFORD 'Peace Studies in Higher Education' Conf. org. for those who wish to write/speak on their experience of Peace Studies teaching and research and those who wish to learn. **Contact: James O'Connell, School of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, W. Yorkshire. 0274 733455.**

14-16 SEPT LIVERPOOL '1984 — the Present, the Future' Politics Assoc. Annual Conf. City of Liverpool College of Higher Education, Prescot, Merseyside. **Details and enrolment: G. T. Prout, Vice Chairman, 64 West Hill Drive, Dartford, DA1 3EA. 0322 75145.**

18 SEPT LONDON Joint GAS/SSS meeting 'The Statistical Systems of the Metropolitan Boroughs' Spkr. John S. Chapman Head of Intelligence Unit GLC. 4.30pm Manson Theatre LSHTM Visitors welcome. **Details from: Denise Lievesley, SCPR, 35 Northampton Sq, EC1V 0AX 01-250 1866.**

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MEETINGS

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme. Informal Question/Answer Meeting, 'The Bhagavad-Gita as Yoga'. Sun. 29 July 8 p.m. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

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ATTRACTIVE, SLIM, elegant woman (25), interests: human rights and current affairs. Enjoys country, coast and discovering London. Wishes to meet intelligent, kind, non-dogmatic man (30-45) for friendship. Near London with phone. Box 8931.

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HONEST, CARING relationship with responsible, intelligent man, 45-60s, sought by attractive, youthful 57, outgoing widow. Continental origin. Many interests. London based. Box 8919.

IF YOU are female and under 40 please write a 4000 word essay on why you would like to meet a beautiful 35-year-old North London man. On second thoughts just send an address or phone no. so that we can find out about each other by talking. Box 8914.

IS THERE a female willing to arrange occasional (possibly frequent) meetings/visits with/to attractive male, 39, living in West Midlands? Interests: gardening, music, having more fun. Box 8894.

LADY, 5' 6", personable, kind, understanding, seeks taller, intelligent, Asian gentleman, 40/50, for maybe long-term relationship. Box 8870

LEFTISH WOMAN, 40, one child, independent, non-smoker, almost vegetarian, likes books, walking, films, conversation, *travel, seeks easy-going, creative, non-sexist* bloke, Cambridge. Box 8913.

LESBIAN/GAY friends wanted with special interest in Psychiatry and Russia. I'm 29, attractive, female, good-natured and lonely. Please write soon. Maximum discretion assured! Box 8909.

LITERARY FEMALE, 40s, sought by spiritually isolated male with wide interests who is fast becoming more interested in books than people. Box 8908.

LIVELY, INTELLIGENT, attractive woman, liking books, horses, dogs, or the stage, sought by well-established, solvent, humorous, freelance writer (48), in Cotswolds/West Midlands. Box 8866.

MALE TO FEMALE transsexual, politically aware, not yet changed over, seeks friends, male or female, for support and socialising. Berks./W. London etc. (based Slough). Box 8901.

MELLOW FELLOW (60-70), sought by mature woman for caring friendship. Sense of fun and the ridiculous essential. Theatre, music, books, sports, travel. London area. Box 8861.

OUTGOING, PETITE, attractive divorcee, (33), happy disposition, intelligent, seeks unattached, articulate man of integrity for friendship/caring relationship. Enjoys: conversation, travel, music, books, cultural and other pursuits. Birmingham/environs. Box 8893.

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SEPARATED EDINBURGH businessman seeks intelligent, home-loving lady in similar circumstances. Varied interests, art, music, politics are left wing. Enjoys some travel but not flying. Friendly and normally confident and humorous disposition in secure relationship but vulnerable. Willing to consider move to other part of UK eventually. Would like to exchange letters and photographs initially. All replies acknowledged and utmost confidence assured. Box 8917.

SLIM, FEMININE woman lawyer, broken marriage, seeking special man, unattached, tall, personable and caring professional/graduate, youthful fifties, enthusiasm for life, confidence respected. Box 8918.

SOCIALIST FEMALE, with financially independent future, seeks leftist guy to give her second child (somewhat belatedly). Friendship/marriage considered. W. Yorks. Box 8900.

SWEDISH GENTLEMAN (PhD), 60, 6' 2", divorced, intending to move house to GB, would like to get in touch with attractive lady. Box 8905.

TYNESIDE: PROFESSIONAL man (37), still seeks female (non-smoking), companionship. Interests include: films, theatre, music, sports. Write to Box 8892.

TYNESIDE WOMAN, thirties, lively, strong-minded, feminist, peace-activist, seeks gentle, non-sexist, non-smoking man. Sense of humour essential. For friendship and cuddles. Box 8911.

UNIVERSITY LECTURER (Humanities), young thirties, bi-lingual, enjoys entertaining (gourmet cook!), fun to live with, would like to meet cheerful, friendly, kind, sensitive, sensible, intelligent, educated young woman, willing to live for a few years in the Gulf. Photo and phone number please. Box 8904.

UNIVERSITY LECTURER, 30, PhD, author, attractive, excellent background, Scotland based, Indian origin, needs a lady, purpose: serious relationship, marriage. Box 8872.

WEST LONDON widow, 50, 5' 8", kindly, loyal, affectionate, solvent, seeks companionship, male or female, to share life's pleasures and explore the meaning of it all. Box 8930.

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